



MYSTICISM

The Spiritual Path

RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS

MYSTICISM

The Spiritual Path

Lekh Raj Puri

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Published by:
J. C. Sethi, Secretary
Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Dera Baba Jaimal Singh
Punjab 143 204, India

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Ninth edition 2009

16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-81-8256-840-2

Printed in India by: Replika Press Pvt. Ltd.

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Preface

Man's five senses are like five doors opening on the external world, but more wonderful than these, he has a window inside himself, which opens on the unseen world.

AL-GHAZALI

WITHIN THE COVERS of *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path*, ardent seekers of Truth have the opportunity to investigate the concept of the mystic universe. Were mystic truths a galaxy of stars, it might be said that Lekh Raj Puri, the author of this book, has identified for us its major constellations. An extensive work, *Mysticism* offers the reader much to consider, discern and digest. L. R. Puri, who was professor of philosophy at Punjab University, Lahore, discusses the philosophy of mystical experience and supports his discussion with a wealth of inspiring quotes from mystics of different traditions. The result is a book which offers a torch to all who wish to banish darkness.

A scholarly treatise on the way of mysticism, *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path* reflects the author's long and devoted association with his Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh, known also as the Great Master. Lekh Raj Puri draws on the teachings of his Master and the wealth of quotations from the Persian and Indian spiritual traditions that the Great Master used to cite in his discourses.

He also shares his own detailed research into the mystic schools and practices of India and draws his personal conclusions as to the value and relevance of these practices. The result is a logical framework through which the seeker may consider mysticism as a spiritual path.

First published in two volumes in 1938 and 1940, *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path* in its present edition has been consolidated into one volume. In this revision, quotations have been sourced and referenced where possible, and formatting and changes in the words have been made to clarify meaning. Because the author has created his own English translations from Persian, Punjabi and Hindi texts, the references given are to the original-language books.

The original was written in an outline form, as it was taken from a series of lectures. This format has been retained, as well as the division of the material into four parts. Since the book is based on lectures given at different times and places, the reader may note a considerable degree of repetition. This has been retained, with the understanding that repetition of subtle and unfamiliar spiritual perspectives can be helpful. Part One explores the fundamental problems of life, posing such questions as: What are we? Does God really exist? What is beyond death? What is the ultimate Truth? Through an examination of philosophy, religion and mysticism, the author assists us in seeking answers to these as well as other questions occurring in our thoughts.

Part Two dwells on mysticism, including an introduction to practices that lead to transcendent realms and experience. Within this discussion, the author speaks at length on the role of the mystic adept. He writes: "Mystics transport our souls from this lowest and grossest creation into subtle transcendent realms of pure spirituality; they take us out of this delusion and darkness of phenomena into the light of absolute reality. They do good to our very being, to our essence, to our soul, and their good is everlasting and eternal."

Part Three explains mystic realms of consciousness and key practices and forms of Indian mystic philosophy. Delving more deeply into the terms and schools of mysticism, the author presents and discusses the various approaches and practices in relation to Shabd Yoga, the path to spiritual union through the Sound or Word, the Shabd. He explains the two great realms of creation: the eternal oneness of Dayal, where all is mercy and love and where the soul has its source, and the realm of Kal, the sphere of time, impermanence and duality, where life as we know it is enacted.

Part Four explores the nature, characteristics and results of the practice of Shabd Yoga, which the author describes as “the proper practice for modern times”. He translates the knowledge he gained through many hours of attendance in the satsangs or spiritual discourses of his Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh, into a compelling analysis of Shabd Yoga, framing the practice within the context of the mystic path.

Much like a road map for the inner quest, *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path* provides the would-be aspirant on the mystic journey with information about the mystic world and the practical means for gaining access to it. The physical world may change, yet mystic Truth does not; it is steady and constant. And it is in light of this constancy that *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path* is offered to the spiritual seeker of today, as valid and relevant now as it was when first published seventy years ago.

J. C. Sethi
Secretary

Author's Note

MYSTICISM HAS NEVER been popular with the world at large. As it does not touch their sphere of interest, most people find it cold and dry. They concern themselves wholly with visible, palpable phenomena; subtle ethereal entities have no attraction for them. They are too much taken up with this world to think of the next; too much engrossed in material progress to look after their spiritual welfare. How many desire to have a peep into the hidden mystery of things and the underlying reality of the universe? How many seek spiritual insight into the Infinite Before and the Eternal Beyond? How many are athirst for the true knowledge of God, soul, and other transcendent entities? Very few indeed!

Now, even out of these few, several, although interested in questions about absolute reality, are still averse to mysticism. Their aversion is perhaps due to misconceptions about this subject and some sort of bias against occult sciences in general. This book, it is hoped, will help to remove misconceptions from the minds of its readers, for the object here has been to present in a clear and concise manner the outstanding features of mysticism, so that it may easily be distinguished from philosophical theories on the one hand and religious doctrines on the other, and ultimately be judged for what it is. All that is given here has been substantiated by original vernacular and classical quotations from the writings of some well-known mystics with their English translation. An

effort has been made to stick, wherever possible, to the wording of the quotation; but where a free rendering is given, the sense of the original has been scrupulously preserved.

The subject of mysticism is very vast, subtle, and intricate, and full justice cannot be done to it in such a small space. Some points have merely been touched upon or treated very briefly, not because they are unimportant in themselves, but for fear lest a detailed discussion of them should carry us beyond the scope of the present treatise.

In the subject matter, as also the manner in which it is presented, this book is perhaps the first of its kind in the English language, and should prove useful to all who seek a true knowledge of Reality, without any distinction of caste, creed, or colour. It contains an account of the methods employed by mystics for exploring the unknown transcendent regions beyond death, and getting salvation, now and here. Thus, it should provide food for reflection to all true seekers.

Shabd Yoga, to which the whole of Part Four is devoted, claims to show us the way to true and transcendent knowledge, highest and lasting bliss, and deepest and purest love; to lead us out of the karmic chain of cause and effect into the realm of naked and refulgent spirituality; and ultimately to land us in the warm lap of our true Heavenly Father, who is the fountainhead of all being and existence. All this can be achieved in this very life, and before the soul finally leaves this mortal frame. Such a subject concerns the whole of humankind, and time spent in its study would not be thrown away.

This book is based on the notes taken from the satsangs of my Master at Beas, to whom I have no words to express my profound gratitude. Originally a paper for the Brett Philosophical Society, Government College, Lahore, this book is, in point of language, more suited at many places to oral delivery. Moreover, perhaps

partially due to the very nature of the subject, it is also open to the charge of repetition. For these and all other shortcomings, the writer craves the indulgence of his kind readers and trusts that they will peruse these few pages with an unbiased mind and with a view to getting at his real meaning.

Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

L. R. Puri

1938

PART ONE



Need of Mysticism

CHAPTER ONE

Fundamental Problems of Life or Metaphysical Considerations

WHEN WE CAST a glance around us, we find ourselves in a heterogeneous world with a keen struggle for life raging on all sides. All try to stay on here as long as they can and make their stay as pleasurable as possible. With most of us, this has become the very aim of our earthly existence. Our thought is solely riveted to this present life; it seldom goes beyond to know what lies on the other side. Instead of probing deep to the ultimate reality, we remain satisfied with phenomena or appearance. But if we would not be driven blindly, we must pause to reflect on ourselves and try to find out what we are and where we are going. There are several pressing problems which meet us on the very threshold of consciousness and demand a solution.

Various problems

What are we? What is all this that we see about us? What is the object of this creation? What is our function in it? Did we exist before our birth? If we did, what was our condition then? Shall we continue to be after death? If yes, then what state shall we find ourselves in? What is the reality or essence of our being? What is this

human life? Have we been sent here? If so, who has sent us and why? What is all this phenomena of the universe? Why is it like this and not otherwise? What is its deep reality or significance? Has it been created? If so, by whom? Who is that Creator? What is his nature and being? Does God really exist? If so, what is his relationship with us? What is time? What is space? Is this whole fabric of the universe finally going to dissolve? If it is, why and when? What will happen after that dissolution? What is death? What is beyond death? Is death really painful? If so, how can we avert that pain and solve that mystery?

Questions like these stare us in the face; we cannot pass them over. They must be answered if we want to lead a real waking life, if we desire our own true well-being and the well-being of others.

I Problem of being

a. Reality of the human being

What are we? The obvious answer is that we are human beings. But is human-ness the essence of our being? Shall we cease to be when we 'shuffle off this mortal coil'? This we do not know. We are not *body* to be sure, for according to physiologists the human body undergoes an entire change in seven or twelve years' time. Our habits change, our thoughts, our mental faculties, all change; everything about us changes in the course of time.

What is it then that subsists and persists, that does not change, which constitutes an entity? What is it that keeps us the same person in spite of all apparent change, that makes us the same individual when everything known to us changes? What is it that notices the change as a change in the same thing, that gives us the certainty that *I* am the same person? What is this *I* that sees, thinks and questions? What is the ultimate reality and essence of our being?

What is consciousness? What is soul? About that we are absolutely in the dark. Our vision is limited to the short span of time between our birth and death. Of the vast infinity before and beyond, we are utterly ignorant.

What you are you do not see;
What you see is your shadow.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE,
IN *WIT AND WISDOM OF GANDHI, NEHRU, TAGORE*, p.408

Our reality is hidden from us.

خویشتن نشاخش مسکین آدمی از فرونی آمد و شد در کی

Poor man knoweth not himself;
From greatness doth he come,
But alas, he hath become small!

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1000^{*}

b. Reality of the world

Then what is this world? Is it what it appears to be or has it a reality behind its appearance? It is changing every moment; everything here is undergoing perpetual, unceasing change. Is there anything in it that does not change? What is the reality behind phenomena? Do we know this? We see and experience only phenomena or appearance; reality is a sealed book to us.

تو مرغ تیز پری ہم بہ آسماں بر پر تو تن زدی و کلفتی کہ ایں فغاں ز کجا

^{*} For notes on the main mystics and authors quoted, see Notes on Mystics and Authors Cited.

A fast bird art thou;
 Fly thou up towards the heavens.
 But in the body art thou confined
 And questioneth not
 From whence cometh this sound.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

What is this noisy world? Is it all a meaningless jumble – a big buzzing confusion – or has it a significance? What is its true reality?

c. Object of human life

And what is this human life? What is its ultimate object? People come into the world, play their part and go away. "This world is a stage, and we all its actors are...and one man in his time plays many parts," but all of us have our entrances and our exits. We strive to keep the soul and body together and carry on this struggle until the two are sundered by the cruel hand of death. Many a blooming flower is nipped in the bud; many a deserving person is neglected and thrown into the background.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

THOMAS GRAY, "ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD"

The enthusiastic hopes of many a rising youth are crushed to pieces before they see the light of realization. What is the meaning of this mysterious play? Do we come here merely to pass our time and be gone?

* William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II:VII:1037, 1040.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?
Most men eddy about
Here and there, eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,

Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving nothing,
And then they die.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, "RUGBY CHAPEL"

Is our business merely to eat, drink, beget children, earn our living...and finally die? Is there no better end to human life?

d. Reality of time and space

Further, what is time? What is space? Are they infinite? Is there no beginning and no end to them? Can we imagine infinite time and infinite space? Can we imagine them to be limited? Are they a delusion? Are they real or only categories of the mind? Do they have objective reality or are they merely subjective phenomena?

If time and space are real, then as we can think only of a small section of their infinite expanse, it seems the world beyond must remain a mystery forever; if they are unreal, that would change our notions of things as well, for all things of this world are in time and space. In that case, things themselves would cease to be real. Then what is the absolute reality?

e. The Supreme Being

And what is God? Is there any God at all? What is the source of the enormous power at work in the world? Can matter have power or energy without having consciousness or at least connection with a conscious being? What is power? In our personal

experience, do we find it allied with consciousness? We know, feel, will and do. How can we explain power in nature? What is electricity or magnetism or gravitation, for instance? Can an inert piece of dead matter attract other things to it? Is this round ball of our earth living? How does the sun manage to keep so many planets revolving round it?

The real question is: What *is* power? Do we know of power separate from conscious willing? If not, then what is the source of this practically infinite store of power in nature? Shall we assign this power to God? Then what is God, and what connection has he with us? What is the final reality?

2 Problem of morality

a. What is good?

Next let us consider the question of moral good and evil. People say we should do good to others, and certainly we ought to do good, not only to others but also to ourselves. The utilitarian cry is: the greatest good of the greatest number. Every religion teaches us to be benevolent, to do others good. But what is good? This is to be settled first of all. Unless we know what good is, it is absurd to talk of doing good and realizing good. What is good? That is the fundamental question, without solving which we cannot say what line of action we should adopt and what sort of deeds we should perform. Unless we know our destination, we cannot make a start in the right direction. Unless we discover what we have to aim at in this worldly struggle, we are not well equipped for the battle of life.

Generally we look upon helping others with food, clothes and shelter as doing good. We give a penny to a blind person or a loaf of bread to a hungry one and feel satisfied that we have done some good. Perhaps it is really good to help the needy – to clothe the naked and feed the hungry – but are we sure that by doing so we

are doing good and not harm to them? Can we be sure when we do not know what the ultimate effect of such an action may be? It may result in the spiritual degradation of the poor creature, for we know not whether privation and suffering are better for their spiritual uplift, or plenty. With our frail intellect, we cannot gauge what the effect of our action will be on their soul and how they will fare from it in the long run. Our physical wants are not the most urgent nor the most primary. We have spiritual needs which are more pressing, for it is believed that soul is a more integral part of us than the body. Then what is good for the soul?

Education is the cry of the day, and education indeed satisfies one's intellectual craving. Opening schools and colleges and sowing the seed of such knowledge through radio programmes is perhaps really very good, but intellectual learning is not the be-all and end-all of human life. Intellect is perhaps merely an instrument for the use of the soul, as body is a grosser one. We must meet the needs of these instruments proportionately to their worth, but what is the need of the soul? What is that highest kind of good, which is not physical or intellectual but purely spiritual, which survives the death of the body and the intellect, and transcends the bounds of the physical and mental worlds?

The effects of our ordinary charitable and benevolent actions pass away very soon; they bring but a temporary and superficial relief. All our physical and intellectual wants end with our life; they are concerned with this world. What is that good which may live with us after our death, which may be useful to us at all times? What is that good which may colour the very essence of our existence, which may enter the deep recesses of our being and produce an everlasting effect?

b. Is good relative or absolute?

And we have also to find out whether good is relative or absolute. Shall we say with Hamlet that "there's nothing either good

or bad, but thinking makes it so", that it is all a relative thing? If good is relative then it is also variable, and we can have no fixed standard of morality. If it is absolute then it should have no reference to bad, nor to persons or places. Can we at all find out such an absolute good?

With all human limitations, can we think of a good which may have no reference to humanity? Can we continue to be human and still think as non-humans? Can we as human beings transcend the limits of human thinking and lay our hands on a good which is not relative to persons or places, which is not good for such-and-such a being but is a universal, absolute good: good for all – beasts, people, angels, gods and all – good in itself and by itself, independent and transcendent, having no reference to bad nor to the mental and moral constitution of human beings, nor to anything else? Can one see things green or white if one is always wearing blue glasses? We must see things not as they are in themselves, but as they are for us, as they appear to human organs and senses. Thus we can neither take our stand on absolute good, nor does relative good satisfy our desire for a permanent criterion of morality. Then what kind of thing is good?

c. What is right?

Let us also see how we can determine right and wrong action. Good, as we have seen, is the goal we have to aim at in this world; it is, so to speak, the end of our life. Now *right* is that action which promotes the realization of the good, and that which retards it is wrong. Thus right and wrong have no meaning independent of the good. It is our idea of the good which decides for us what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, as long as we do not know what good is, we are not in a position to tackle the question of right and wrong action.

In fact the question of action does not arise unless we know what the reality of our being is and what the reality of this world in

which we move is, for action does not mean any kind of movement; it implies conscious willing and knowing. How can a person act at all if he is in utter darkness about himself and his surroundings?

d. Question of free will

With regard to the question of right action, we should also know whether or not human beings have free will.

(1) *Free will of human beings and foreknowledge of God:* If human beings have free will, then it means that they can choose between various alternatives. And as long as the choice is thus open, it is undecided and unsettled, it is uncreated. It may fall on any one of the several alternatives: which that alternative would be is not known yet. It is known to none, not even to God; for if God knows it, it means that it is already fixed and the person has no choice. Thus if human beings have free will, none can have foreknowledge. Even God cannot have foreknowledge. These two things, God's foreknowledge and human free will, seem to be incompatible.

Against this, one may argue that God knows all things of the past, present and future, but that he does not interfere in people's doings. Just as someone can make a guess about future happenings and the guess may turn out to be true, similarly God can know of future events. But as he is the most perfect being, his guesses are invariably correct. In this manner, God may know of the future without influencing human will.

Now, if we examine this kind of reasoning carefully, we find that it is fallacious and does not really prove the thing that it apparently seems to do.

The first point to be noticed here is that if guesswork must invariably be true, as we believe it to be in the case of God, then it ceases to be guesswork. A guess implies some degree of doubt, and as God is supposed to have no doubts, in his case it is knowledge and not guesswork.

Now for the sake of argument, let us say that God only knows the future actions of human beings, but does not determine them. This, however, does not help us at all in settling the question of human free will, because even if God does not determine our future actions, but only knows them, the fact that they are determined remains. Knowledge of a thing presupposes its existence. Who determines them, whether our own nature through a long chain of cause and effect, or an external agency, is immaterial; for inasmuch as they are already known, and thus fixed and not left to our free choice to be made at the moment of action, they are determined or predestined for us.

If a thing must happen in a certain way, although that way is to be arrived at through a long and complicated process of various causes and effects operating at different times and in different places, if the thing cannot happen otherwise, then certainly it is predetermined and fixed. Foreknowledge invariably and essentially implies predestination – the questions *Whose foreknowledge?* and *Who predetermines?* do not arise.

The point seems to be quite clear; for obviously until the person who has to decide between two or more alternatives is born, the decision is not made, and any one of the various alternatives is possible; thus if the thing is undecided, that is, the decision is non-existent, how can it exist or be present in the mind of God or anyone else? The decision has yet to be made by the free will of the person who is yet to be born. So long as that person is unborn, his free will is also unborn, and consequently his decision is also unborn; it is in an uncreated state; it does not exist; it does not exist even in the mind of God; that is, even God does not know of it, he has no foreknowledge.

Thus to all appearances it seems that either God has foreknowledge or human beings have free will. Both things cannot be so at the same time. If they are, then it is a great and important problem for us to know how such obvious contradictions can be

reconciled. What sort of God do we have who knows what we are doing and what we shall do, and still leaves it to our free choice to do whatever we like? And what sort of creatures must we be?

(2) *Free will and determinism*: But if a human being has no free will, then everything is already fixed for him. He has no choice, and therefore the question of right and wrong does not arise; as Kant says: "You must only if you can." Consequently there can be no reward or punishment, no morality, no striving or struggling, and no true action. All these lose their significance. We shall, in that case, be mere machines, what the French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes, considered the father of modern philosophy, calls automaton, which work automatically and mechanically.

3 Problem of misery

What is misery? Why is there so much misery, poverty, crying and wailing in the world?

We like to be optimists and take this world to be a place of enjoyment. We try to see pleasure all around us, but what does our experience say? It is no use shutting our eyes to stern facts and living in a fool's paradise. We read books and hear lectures on laughing. No doubt the philosophy of laughter is all right in its place, but we must remember that there is another philosophy also and perhaps a greater philosophy – the philosophy of weeping.

Is not pain a greater reality than pleasure? Does not suffering go deeper into our being? Then what is the cause of this tremendous amount of misery and trouble that we witness in this world? Why all this sorrow and suffering, this pain and poverty, anguish and agony?

When we go into hospitals, poorhouses and orphanages, we are stunned to see humanity reduced to such a wretched plight. Look

at the deaf and dumb, the blind and the maimed, the crippled and the diseased, the poor and the needy, the hungry and the naked, the homeless and the destitute; your heart melts like wax, and you cannot check your tears. Why do poor people suffer? Why does not God relieve them? Why is there such a large number of miserable sufferers in this blessed world of a merciful God? Is it not a mystery? Does it not demand a solution? Is it not a pressing problem for all who want to know the absolute truth and ultimate reality? Certainly it is. Then what is the solution? There we have to confess our utter ignorance. We are proud of our knowledge, we boast of our achievements, but we know nothing of such fundamental and vital problems. Our boast is vain; our pride is hollow. We are blind, but we know not even our own blindness.

Not only within hospitals and poorhouses but even outside them, we see thousands of people weeping and wailing helplessly like dumb driven cattle, filling the atmosphere with their heartrending cries. Everyone has his own troubles and sorrows, his private worries and anxieties. Who is there that is truly and perfectly happy? Hardly anyone. And even our so-called pleasures are alloyed with pain; pure, unmixed happiness is a non-entity. It is a term that is not found in the dictionary of this world.

راحت بے رنج در ماتم سرائے خاک نیست خندہ گل گریہ ہائے تلخ دارد چوں کُلاب

In this earthly abode of sorrow,
Pleasure free from pain existeth not;
Even the laughter of the flower, such as the rose,
Hath in it a bitter grief.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

There is no rose without a thorn. All of us are weeping over our lot, and those who are contented still have their share of sorrow.

ਨਾਨਕ ਦੁਖੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਸੇਸਾਰੁ ॥

Unhappy is all the world, O Nanak.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.954

If somebody has lost his father, another grieves over the death of her mother; if this person has been bereaved of a beloved son, that one has been separated from a dear daughter. Thousands of people are dying every day, leaving behind whole families miserable and mourning. Widows deprived of the affectionate care and attention of their husbands, little orphans in vain longing for the caresses and loving words of their departed parents, sisters lamenting the death of their brothers, mothers becoming mad on the demise of their only sons – these are sights that touch even the most callous heart and melt even the most adamant breast. Who will not shed tears over such pitiable sufferers! Who will not feel for such forlorn and misery-stricken human beings!

When an epidemic – plague or cholera or influenza – rages at a place, it works great havoc among human beings. People begin to feel the approach of doomsday. When a big fire breaks out, it consumes many buildings and devours many persons. In an earthquake a whole city may be utterly devastated and levelled to the ground. And during wars, thousands of people are killed every day and a heartrending wailing spreads all around.

What is the explanation of all this misery, crying and wailing? Why should such things be found in the best of all possible worlds? Do we not hug false hopes and cherish vain desires, which are shattered to pieces by the stern facts of experience? When we look at the poor, we see them half-fed and half-clothed, ruthlessly neglected by the world. This world is indeed a vast vale of tears, and if it is not, we are sadly deluded. Such a tremendous amount of suffering! Is this the ultimate truth about the world or have we a more hopeful reality behind these confusing phenomena?

4 Problem of cruelty

Not only is this question of misery so baffling, but the problem of cruelty is still more confounding. Why should there be so much cruelty in this beautiful creation of a gracious God?

In this world we see that one species of animals depends for its existence on some other species. If small fish are food for bigger fish such as whales and others in the sea, deer and sheep are food for lions and tigers on land. The dog runs after the cat, and the cat is lying in wait for the rat. Eagles swoop down on sparrows, and sparrows look about for small insects. Kill others and fill your stomach; destroy others and make your way: that seems to be the principle of existence in this world. Only the strongest survive, while the weak perish. If you want to live, you must not mind others' sufferings; you must be cruel to those who are weaker than yourself.

And among animals one species preys upon only a particular class of other species, but human beings spare none. Everything is fit for human consumption. There are countries where snakes, lizards and other such reptiles are cooked and eaten, and other countries where rats and such small creatures are turned into dishes for the table. Human beings are the most powerful, if not physically, at least intellectually, and consequently they are the most merciless. They kill most indiscriminately and most carelessly. There is no limit to cruelty in their case, or perhaps cruelty has no meaning for them. Thus, ruining others is the way of keeping up one's own existence. One person's fall is another's rise; one person's food is another's poison. Everywhere life flourishes by destroying life; in all nature the cry is "Kill!" and push your way up.

What is the meaning of such universal killing and destroying, of such enormous barbarity? Is 'kill' the final word, or have we anything else to say on the point? There are people who are so wicked that they would not hesitate to take another's life, be it

even for a very trivial personal gain. What is the explanation of this hard-heartedness and lack of feeling?

We believe, and perhaps rightly, that the end of all must be good, that every winter must change to spring, but we cannot ignore the stern truths of experience. Experience is indeed the best teacher, for it disillusion us at every step. We like to keep to our fond hopes of childhood and come out into the world to see in it a veritable image of heaven, but to our dismay and disappointment very soon we find that it is no bed of roses. Its nice-looking orchards are scattered over with prickly shrubs, and deadly serpents creep under its beautiful verdure.

How many good people have not been ill-treated by this blessed world? How many saints and reformers have been left untouched? Sant Kabir was thrown before a furious elephant to be trampled underfoot, and he was hurled into the river Ganges to be drowned. Guru Arjun Dev was placed on red-hot sheets of iron to be roasted and shrivelled. Mansur was skinned alive and mercilessly butchered. Guru Tegh Bahadur was imprisoned and ruthlessly beheaded at Delhi. Mansur was crucified for his piety and truth, and so was Jesus Christ. The two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh were put behind a wall, and the wall was raised over their heads, leaving them to die. The Greeks treated their saints no better. Socrates was given poison to drink because he did not believe in the gods of the state and was said to have corrupted the people of the city. This blind and ungrateful world has spared no great person. All were tormented and tortured in their own day.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
AS YOU LIKE IT II:VII:1074-1076

5 Problem of death

Similarly death is a great mystery. Sooner or later all of us have to leave this world; all have to die and go we know not where.

All human things are subject to decay,
And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.

JOHN DRYDEN, "MAC FLECKNOF"

We know that we have to depart, but we know not when. It may be today, it may be tomorrow, but our going is certain. What sort of journey it will be we cannot say, but go we must. There is no question about that.

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

BIBLE, *GENESIS* 3:19

Although the soul is said to be imperishable, the body must be reduced to ashes one day, but we seldom think of our end. We weep over the death of other people but never care to contemplate our own fate.

کروہ برویگراں نوحہ گری مدّتے بنشین و بر خود میگری

For others weepst thou.

O sit for a time and weep thou for thyself.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:479

a. *What is death?*

Do we feel pain when we die? If so, how can we avoid that pain and solve this mystery? What kind of experience does a person have when he is lying on his deathbed? What sort of country

do people go to after their death? And what kind of journey is it that they make to the so-called next world?

Do we know all this? Not at all. We may guess, we may argue, we may reason and think, we may study and learn from books, we may stretch our imagination and fancy, but we do not know this mystery. We may have blind belief but we do not possess certain and clear knowledge. We all have to go to that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns: death spares none. And if die we must, then why shut our eyes to our coming death? Why not face the question boldly?

b. Preparation for the last journey

In the world, when we have to go even a small distance, we begin making preparations for the journey long before the time of our departure. We find out about the proper conveyance to carry us to our destination, write to our friends to receive us or wire to reserve accommodation in a hotel for our night's rest, and send word to the people in charge of the conveyance to book a seat for us. We do not undertake a journey haphazardly, but make all sorts of provisions beforehand; and when we start, we take lots of things with us for use on the way, such as tiffin carriers full of various kinds of food to appease our hunger, and rugs and blankets to protect us from the cold. Further, when we travel in foreign countries, we take some knowledgeable person with us to serve as a guide.

But what preparation have we made for our journey to the next world? We have to go to an unfamiliar and strange place, and we may be called even today. Are we prepared? Have we made any arrangements for conveyance and for food on the way? Have we secured any guide to lead us on the right track? Do we have any friend to receive us there? No, we have not; we have not even discovered what place we are bound for, and what sort of friends we can have there.

c. Ever a possibility

It is very astonishing indeed that we seldom think about death, although it may occur at any moment. For us there are always two possibilities – life or death. We are so much taken up with the thoughts of this life that we have no time to think of the other alternative – death. Our wisdom is confined to the concerns of this world, and we are extremely inconsistent because we do not use our prudence for our spiritual welfare. In worldly affairs we are very wise. In earning our daily bread we try to be extra clever and make as much money as we can by working hard day and night, but we never realize that this body, for which we do so much, is after all to be taken away from us.

In the world, whenever we want to do a thing, we think of and provide beforehand for all the alternatives that there may be; but alas, we always ignore one which is ever possible, and that is death. We know what we will do if we live, but we know not what we shall do if we die. If we live we shall want a house to dwell in, food to eat, clothes to wear, and so on, and we have already procured these things for our future use; but if we die we have made no provision. We have not even cared to find out what provision can be made for this alternative.

6 Problem of relativity

Finally, everything seems to be relative in this world; it has a significance and existence only relative to other things. Is this relativity true? If it is, then the world may be a mere delusion; it may have an existence only relative to us. Even our own selves as people may be unreal; we may be human beings only relative to other things of this world. We may not be so many different entities; our differences might be merely relative to our environment. Time and space, goodness and badness, free will and determinism, pleasure

and pain, life and death, these may have no existence in the absolute reality; they might be real only relative to our existence as people.

Constituted as we are at present, we cannot know a thing unless that thing is relative to something else; it must have a centre of reference. For instance, we know good only if we distinguish it from bad, but goodness and badness may have no meaning where there is absolute reality. Relativity perhaps comes in wherever there is variety. In the absolute there might be perfect unity. Then what is the truth? Is this world relative or absolute? If relative, then it would lose its reality as a physical world; if absolute, then how is its variety to be explained? What is the ultimate truth?

7 Significance of these problems

When we talk in this vein, we may be charged with the sin of pessimism, of focusing on the dark side of things. If stating plain facts even when they happen to be unpleasant is a sin, then we plead guilty to the charge. But guilty or not guilty, the stern facts are still there. When a cat comes to pounce upon a pigeon, the pigeon closes its eyes to keep away the dreadful sight. But that does not send the cat away; it is still there to kill the pigeon. Similarly, by shutting our eyes to facts we do not drive them away; rather we ourselves are driven along by them. It is neither wise nor courageous to turn one's back to an approaching danger. The brave person faces the danger boldly and tries to overcome all difficulties.

If we think seriously and deeply on ourselves, we cannot overlook or evade these questions. These are the fundamental problems of life which spring up with the very dawn of consciousness. Until we solve them we cannot move an inch, we cannot take a step. Even the most momentous affair of this world dwindles into insignificance before these vital inquiries. They touch us to the

core; they go deep into our very being. They are questions of life and death for us.

In pitch darkness as we are, we know neither ourselves nor other people, nor our surroundings. Like the blind, we merely grope in the dark and are blown hither and thither by every waft of the wind of causation or karmas or destiny.

We are in a deep slumber that takes away from us all true consciousness and sensibility. We are in an intoxication that does not let us attend to our most serious concern, that keeps us out of our wits, so to speak, and makes us neglect what is of foremost importance. We are not in our senses; our wits have gone a-wool-gathering.

पीत्वा मोहमयीं प्रमादमदिरामुन्मत्त भृते जगत ।

Having drunk the wine of negligence, full of delusion,
The world hath turned mad with intoxication.

BHARTARI HARI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

How strange that we investigate everything of the world but never care to look into our own self! We leave out no object in nature from our study, but we shut our eyes to the reality and essence of our own being. If we sit down to collect ourselves and think on the situation in which we are at present, we find ourselves in utter darkness and extreme ignorance about things which touch us most vitally. Every one of us is truly:

An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

LORD ALFRED TENNYSON, *IN MEMORIAM* VXIV

We should try to go out of this night into the day and find out the land of light and happiness, so that we need cry no more.

8 Solutions to these problems

But is there any way that may lead us out of the universal darkness of this physical world and land us in the world of light and truth and reality? Are there any satisfactory answers to these fundamental problems of ours?

The world offers a variety of solutions. For the sake of convenience, we may divide them into three classes: philosophical, religious and mystical.

a. Philosophical

Philosophy attacks these questions with the weapon of reason. The organ of philosophy is the intellect, for it is through the thinking faculty that philosophers have attempted to arrive at a solution of these problems.

b. Religious

Religion depends on authority, deals mainly with feelings, and tries to find out true answers to these questions through emotion. Every religion lays stress on devotion, faith and feeling. Religions assert that it is through religious emotion that God is most immediate to human beings. Feeling, emotion and devotional attitude of the heart – such are the things that religion goes after. The performance of certain external rites is considered a part of devotion according to most religions.

c. Mystical

Mysticism depends neither on the intellect, nor on feelings and emotion in the ordinary sense. It concerns the transcendent experiences of an individual beyond the sphere of thinking and above the domain of feeling. Mystic knowledge transcends the experiences of an ordinary person. It is the superhuman power of the soul that yields to us direct realization and is the organ of mysticism.

The soul's power is a higher and surer faculty than the five senses or the intellect. It leads us into spiritual transport and brings about a transcendent communion of the individual with the universal. It carries us into a supra-sensible rapture or ecstasy which penetrates all phenomena and lays bare to our inner eye the very core of reality and truth.

Let us now take these three, one by one, and examine the solutions that each has to offer.

CHAPTER TWO

Solutions Offered by Philosophy

PHILOSOPHY IS AN ATTEMPT to understand the mystery of the universe by means of the intellect. Different sciences deal with particular bits of experience. Philosophy handles experience as a whole and tries to get at the reality behind all phenomena with the help of reason.

1 Various philosophical theories

There are various theories of philosophy, all of which endeavour to solve these fundamental problems. From the time of the early Greeks, philosophy has been struggling to find out the right version of the reality behind changing phenomena, and that struggle is going on still.

Socrates laid stress on the knowledge of self as a preliminary and essential condition to the knowledge of reality. Plato put forward his “world of ideas”, which he believed to be more real than this physical, material world, and he assigned the greatest reality to the idea of good. But he used the word *idea* in a very special sense – in the sense of universal concepts or categories, or so several modern philosophers think; or perhaps he used it in the sense of the subtle and ethereal astral world, Sukhsham

Jagat (सूक्ष्म जगत), and causal sphere, Karan Lok (कारण लोक), of the Hindus. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, they say, found reality to belong not so much to static things as to process or change itself.

In modern times the rationalists take that to be real which is rational, that which is a consistent and systematic whole. Critics, however, point out that here we have only the 'what' of things, the abstract attributes, and miss the 'that' – existence and substantiality. Critical rationalism is said to be an attempt to find out reality by analyzing consciousness or intellect itself. Applying the principles of identity and contradiction to given propositions, the rationalists want to prove by subjective reasoning the existence or non-existence of objective things.

Kant, the great German philosopher, pointed out that absolute reality could never be known through pure reason. What we do know by means of the intellect is phenomena. Causation, time, space, substantiality, uniformity of nature – all are merely categories of the mind and the sensibility, and are, so far, subjective. Objective reality or *noumena* or thing-in-itself is forever beyond the reach of our thinking faculty. Thus Kant admits in so many words that pure philosophy can never find God or any other transcendent entity. When he tries to show the necessity of the existence of God in considerations other than those of pure reason, he is going beyond the sphere of philosophy as such.

Hegel, the father of modern idealism, states that reality belongs only to the whole, which appears as many and physical, but which in its wholeness is one unanalyzable, indivisible, spiritual conscious being.

But his theory, too, has been set aside by the present-day theory of new realism, propounded by philosophers like Russell, which affirms that, though things are not what they seem to be, they are not unreal as idealists hold, but real. Each one of them has a distinct existence.

Then there are the pragmatists who uphold that that is true which is useful. The theory of pragmatism concerns itself with workable truth only; it does not bother about absolute truth. The contention of the pragmatists is that workable or relative truth is all that we need in this world, that absolute truth, if there is any at all, has no bearing on our present actions; it is out of place in this world of ours, and consequently any talk of it is futile.

Whatever the trend of thought, philosophy has through all ages kept up the distinction between appearance and reality – which shows that the world is not what it appears to be, but has perhaps a deeper reality behind or beyond phenomena.

What that reality is, if there is any such, we have still to see.

a. Philosophical theories are conflicting

When we study the various schools of philosophy, we find that they support opposing and conflicting views.

- Realism gives distinct reality to every individual bit of experience, and thus we have a variety of real things.
- Idealism, on the other hand, looks only upon one thing as real, which somehow appears to be many. According to this theory, the manyness of the world is a delusion; reality is always one, single, indivisible, by itself, and in itself.
- Rationalism lays emphasis on consistency; for it, that theory is correct which gives us the most consistent account of the varied phenomena of the world.
- Pragmatism looks upon that as true which helps us in our daily actions.

But as philosophical theories are conflicting, we cannot say which embodies the true version of reality. No single theory appeals to all, and consequently a universal verdict is out of the question in this matter.

b. Is the organ of philosophy – intellect – adequate for obtaining absolute, transcendent knowledge?

Apart from this insurmountable difficulty, we have also to see if the organ of philosophy, intellect, is the right organ or faculty for knowing transcendent truths and absolute reality. If after examination we find that intellect is inadequate to deal with the transcendent, then we shall come to the conclusion that no philosophical theory whatsoever, whether of the past, the present, or even the future, can yield knowledge of absolute reality. So let us first find out what the limitations of intellectual knowledge are.

2 Intellect does not give us true knowledge

What is true knowledge? Can intellect give us true and certain knowledge of anything at all? Can it unveil for us the hidden mysteries of the universe and disclose its transcendent secrets?

Now it is obvious that what is truly true today must be true tomorrow, and what is true for one person must be true for all. If what we know to be true today becomes untrue later on, then it only means that our knowledge is defective and unreliable; it is not true knowledge. If a thing is true, it is true at all times and for all people. Truth must be the same for all; it cannot be different for different persons or at different times. It must have objective validity and universal constancy.

a. Intellect changes with time

Now let us see if intellectual knowledge – knowledge acquired through the intellect – conforms to this standard. First of all, is such knowledge constant? Does it remain the same at all times? Does our intellect stick to its judgements?

Does intellect not change its own verdicts? It is a fact of everyday experience that intellect changes its judgements from day to day. What my intellect finds right and true today, it may not do so

tomorrow. Intellect at best gives us theories, and theories change from time to time. Old theories are set aside by new ones, and those in their turn make way for still others. "The old order changeth, yielding place to new"¹ is as true in our beliefs as in our actions.

Heat was once looked upon as something material, but later it was discovered to be purely energy; and our ideas of matter and energy are themselves liable to change. The ancients thought that the sun moved round the earth, but the verdict of the intellect now is that the earth rotates round the sun. We might be right now, but the fact remains that we were wrong at one time.

Why do people change their religions? Simply because what seemed right and true to their intellect before does not do so now. One thing appeals to my intellect at one time but at another it does not, even if the thing is true in itself. Intellect changes its pronouncements very frequently indeed.

Moreover, our intellect is not the same in youth as it was in childhood, and in old age it will be different still. With the course of time, it is undergoing a perpetual change. As it changes, so do its points of view – and consequently its judgements vary from day to day. Who can depend on such a variable judge?

Further, it is not only with age that our intellect changes, but also with different foods and mental states. We reason one way when we are in an emotion, and quite another way when out of it. In anger, in passion, in lust and greed, the intellect speaks through the mouthpiece of the mood. We are creatures of moods, and our intellect swings to and fro like a weathercock in the impulse of the moment.

Our intellect is not a constant and fixed thing. It is a faculty that grows and decays. In love, in hate, in pleasure, in pain, in health, in illness, with every change of mood and temper, it judges of things differently.

¹ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poems*, "La Morte D'Arthur".

b. Intellect changes with place and person

Nor is intellectual knowledge universally true. If intellect were a true and reliable source of information, it would give the same knowledge to all. The knowledge of two people about the same thing should not be different. But it is. There is hardly anything in the world on which all people agree.

The intellect of different persons dictates differently. Even prodigies of intellect differ among themselves and differ on the most fundamental and obvious points. If idealists deny the existence of matter, materialists recognize no mind. Similarly, about ethical questions, there is a vast difference among various schools of morality. If one believes pleasure to be the highest good, another looks upon self-realization as the *summum bonum*. Among such conflicting views, our intellect gets baffled and perplexed, and we are at a loss to find our way out.

Universal agreement on questions which rest on intellect for their validity and truth is extremely rare. If intellect were really a true source of knowledge, how could so many different schools of thought have arisen? Who would have formulated so many different theories of philosophy? The one right and true version should have appealed to the intellect of all, and no new theory would have been started. But the judgement of intellect varies from time to time and from person to person, and new theories are propounded every day.

Our intellect reasons in two ways: deductive and inductive. These are the only two methods of inference open to human intelligence. Now, deduction gives us conclusions which are reliable and certain, but there is nothing entirely new in them. Those conclusions are implicitly contained in the data. Induction gives us new knowledge, but its conclusions can never reach the degree of absolute certainty. Thus, certain and reliable new knowledge is beyond us – at least, our intellect cannot get at it.

c. No universal reasons

In fact, like other human faculties and senses, intellect is also personal, private and subjective. There is no such thing as universal reason any more than universal feeling, universal willing, universal hearing, universal smelling and universal sight. Just as experiences received through my senses are mine, and my feelings and emotions are, strictly speaking, private to myself, similarly my intellect and reasoning are my own. Universal reason, which modern philosophers make so much of, is a chimera. Reason is private and subjective, and as such it does not yield true knowledge of objective reality.

Reason in human beings is a sort of great bluff of nature. First of all, although it is a limited faculty, it seems as if it were unlimited and infinite. Secondly, it is very unreliable and uncertain, but it makes one feel that it is an extremely reliable source of true knowledge and wisdom. Almost everybody looks upon himself as very wise and judges all others by his own standard. Reason has thrown all of us into this delusion, and we depend on this frail faculty even for getting knowledge of transcendent truths, with the consequence that we keep groping in the dark and never seek the inner light which alone reveals reality.

The faculty of the intellect is altogether inadequate for dealing with the transcendent. When it cannot give us reliable knowledge even of the things of this world, how can we expect it to throw light on things of the next world, on non-material and non-physical things, on subtle ethereal entities, on soul and God? Intellect can never get to the bottom of reality, though it may go on trying for ages.

صدیوں فلاسفی کی چٹاں وچنیں رہی لیکن خدا کی بات جہاں تھی وہیں رہی

Philosophizing has been going on for ages...
But our knowledge of God
Hath not advanced even an inch.

QUOTED IN PREFACE TO *THE PATH OF THE MASTERS*, P.IXX

Philosophers are as ignorant of God or reality now as they ever were before. Intellect or reason has been struggling from the first to get a clue to the hidden mystery of phenomena and dive deep into the reality beneath, but all the history of philosophy is a standing record of its continuous series of vain efforts.

3 Intellectual knowledge is not effective in action

We have seen that, as intellect changes its verdict with time, place and person, it is not a source of true and reliable information. But there is also another grave defect in intellectual knowledge: it is not effective in action; it does not control or guide our practical life.

We know many things with the intellect which we fail to put into practice. We know we should not do a certain thing because it is harmful, but still we do it; we cannot help it. The doer seems to be a different person from the knower, and the doer is the stronger of the two. Which is the real person or individual here, the doer or the knower? Certainly not the knower, for he is set aside by the doer, but it cannot be the doer alone, for the knower is still there.

What is this division in the same person? We know, but we are helpless. We know we should not drink, for instance, but when the glass of wine is before us, we may drink in spite of ourself and our knowledge. We are carried away by the impulse of the moment and our knowledge stands aloof.

What is this knowledge that is not ours but sticks to us, that is with us but not for us? It is more or less like a bag of sweetmeats put on the back of a donkey, which has to bear the burden but can make no use of it. The poor creature has all those eatables with him, and possesses them in a way, but he cannot eat them. Similarly we have our intellectual knowledge, which is a burden on our memory but is of no use to us, for our action is independent of it. We act, we move, we will and we do; but our intellectual knowledge stands apart to come back to us when our work is over.

Intellect sometimes cries hard, but the passion and impulse of the moment have no ear for it. Intellect calmly thinks out and informs us of its well-weighed decisions, but hot passion oversteps the cold decrees of reason. It is not easy to curb one's passions. Our intellect is helpless before their tremendous sway. They carry everybody before them as a tempest drives along all dry leaves and straw. Intellectual knowledge is cold and dry; it lacks the genuine warmth and vitality of transcendent realization.

آں مقلد صد دلیل و صد بیان در زباں آردند اردیچ جان

The imitator puts forth
His hundred-and-one arguments and theories,
But only lip-say are those, for they have no life.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:2480

If we really know, then we know when we do not act and we also know when we act. Why should our knowledge not enter our volition and control our actions? Socrates and Plato say rightly that to know what is good is to *be* good. Knowing is really becoming, if the knowledge is true and real. That knowledge which we say we possess, but which is powerless to dictate when we are acting, is not worthy of the name 'knowledge'. It is a mere sham. The so-called knowledge that depends on the intellect is always lame and blind. It is lame because it cannot guide us and cannot help us in our life of action; it is blind because it is variable and consequently unreliable.

4 Intellect cannot deal with the totality of phenomena

Further, intellect cannot handle the totality of phenomena and therefore also cannot fathom the depth of phenomena. Intellect

cannot grasp the whole of phenomena, the totality of experience, because for intellect the object must remain another. Now, that other, which is the object, cannot include the subject, the knowing mind. Howsoever hard we may try to grasp the totality, the whole, we can never include the knowing subject in the object of our knowledge, and hence the most we can do is to think of the whole universe or the whole phenomena minus our own mind or intellect.

This is due to the fundamental duality of psychology. There must be at least two entities for any intellectual knowledge to be possible at all – the subject knowing and the object known. We cannot think of that thing which may include and comprehend both. Everything that we know is a part of phenomena, and our intellect is a part of it, but no one part can contain the whole.

And if reality in its wholeness is not what it appears to be in its parts, then our intellect can never know it. If the whole reality is one and indivisible – and who knows, it may be – then its so-called parts must be unreal, and in that case any one unreal part cannot presume to know the real unity or the real whole.

At any rate, this much is plain – that human intelligence is too feeble and too frail to comprehend reality either in its totality or in its absoluteness.

5 Summary and conclusion

To sum up, the solutions offered by philosophy for our fundamental problems are unsatisfactory, for philosophy can never give us sure knowledge.

- The various philosophical theories put forward are conflicting and therefore confusing.
- Further, the organ of philosophy is intellect, which is a variable thing, changing its verdict with time and place,

with mood and temper, with physical conditions and mental states, and with age and experience.

- Also there are only two ways of reasoning – deductive and inductive. The former gives us no new knowledge, and the conclusions of the latter ever remain uncertain and unreliable. Thus, reliable new knowledge is beyond our intellect.
- Moreover, intellectual knowledge is not effective in action; it does not control our evolution. It is not truly ours, for it does not help us in our life of action and cannot stop us from going wrong.
- And lastly, intellect cannot handle total phenomena, or the complete whole, the totality of experience, because for it the object of knowledge must always remain another. It cannot view the total whole, for howsoever hard it may try, it will always be absent from the object perceived or conceived.

So long as we remain on the level of intellect, we cannot get over this fundamental duality of psychology. We may go above the plane of the intellect if we can and know reality by becoming that reality ourselves if possible, but this much is clear and certain: that with the intellect we can never find out absolute reality.

CHAPTER THREE

Solutions Offered by Religion

RELIGION LAYS great stress on the authority of divine revelation as given in holy books and brings feelings and the emotional side of people to the forefront. Religious emotion, faith, and devotion to the Deity are, we are told, the means of attaining the state of absolute knowledge and supreme bliss.

I Various religions

There are various religions in the world, and each has its own set of doctrines and dogmas, its own rites and rituals, forms and ceremonies.

Christianity believes in the trinity of God: Jesus Christ the Son, God the Father, and the Holy Ghost are considered to be three-in-one. According to this religion, salvation cannot be had but by faith in Christ the Saviour, who died on the cross to wash away and pay for the sins of humankind. Their sacred book is the holy Bible.

Similarly, Muslims look upon Prophet Muhammad as the greatest Prophet, and they believe there can be no salvation without faith in him and the holy Qur'an.

Hindus uphold all sorts of doctrines and principles. In fact, Hinduism today is hardly a religion; it is more or less a community.

All shades of religious belief, all kinds of tenets and dogmas, and all schools of thought find room in the vast ocean of Hinduism. Within its fold we come across all sorts of people – theists, atheists, pantheists, polytheists and so on – and belief in witchcraft and sorcery and in all kinds of evil spirits exists alongside the highest kinds of idealism, monism and monotheism. Some Hindus have faith in incarnations and idol worship, some believe in pure and abstract meditation, and others simply aim at leading a chaste and active life. Arya Samajis and Sanatanists are two Hindu sects that take the holy Vedas to be the highest revealed books, but they each have a different interpretation of these books. There are free-thinkers among the Hindus, and there is room for all.

Sikhs believe in the ten Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak and their holy writings, and depend for their salvation on their staunch faith in the Gurus and recital of the Adi Granth. Similarly Buddhists, Jains and others believe in their own saints and holy books, and seek salvation through such a belief.

Now all religions have their own forms of worship and prayer, their own fasts and pilgrimages, and their own temples, mosques and churches. Religion for many people consists merely in the external observance of the prescribed ritual, in the performance of set ceremonies and pilgrimages to the holy places. But this all seems to be groping in the dark, for God is not a material or physical being that may be sought for in this material world and with this physical body. It appears that all external rites and forms are useful only so far as they arouse our religious emotion and instil in us the spirit of devotion, but no further. They do not open our inner eyes to show us transcendent reality.

Of course all these religions preach morality and induce us to tread in the footsteps of great personages, but their answers to our fundamental questions are very divergent. Let us see how far they help us in solving our problems.

a. Religions are conflicting

In the first place we notice that the solutions offered by various religions are contradictory and opposed to one another. Religions do not agree among themselves. They lead us to different ways and put up different ideals before us. One religion points us to one way for realizing God, another tells us some other way, and so on with all. Now, can we by any means find out which religion is true? These religions set up conflicting principles, yet all claim to have truth on their side. How can we discover the truth?

b. We cannot study all religions

Should we read the sacred books of all religions, and then find out from our personal firsthand study which shows the right path? This we cannot do. Human life is too short for the study of even one-tenth of the religions of the world. And then it is very difficult to say how much time should be devoted to each, and what criterion of efficiency should be set up for the study.

c. Religions ultimately rely on the intellect

Lastly, even after study we shall judge the relative merits of these religions with the help of our intellect, which has been shown in the last chapter to be unreliable. What shall we do then? Shall we say that all religions are equally good and all ultimately take us to God? It may be true perhaps that all roads lead to Rome, but we are not sure. How can we make sure and stand on firm ground? That is the question.

2 Common features of all religions

For this, let us consider the essential points and common features of all religions, and see if religion as such can at all yield us a satisfactory solution to our problems.

First of all, we find that every religion requires us to have faith in some earlier prophet, saint or incarnation, and in his writings. Christianity wants us to believe in Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible, Islam in the Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Qur'an, and similarly other religions in their own saints and their holy writings – followers of Kabir in Saint Kabir and his books, followers of Dadu in Dadu Dayal and his utterances, followers of Paltu in the writings of Paltu Sahib, and so on. Sikhs believe not in one saint, but in the ten Gurus and their sacred writings, but the principle is the same – we have to depend for our salvation on great teachers of the past and their holy books.

This kind of faith may, and does, give some sort of answer to our questions. Hindus believe in their *swarg* (heaven) and *narak* (hell), Muslims in their *bahisht* and *dozakh*, and Christians in their heaven and hell. In every religion there are tenets and dogmas which embody a solution to our problems. But as already stated, the principles and doctrines of the various religions are so conflicting that one is at a loss to know where the truth lies. There is not one accepted way to reach heaven; every religion puts forth its own different method. Consequently, for an objective observer, these religions present but a confused mass of contradictory principles and conflicting doctrines that lead nowhere.

Secondly, even if someone does succeed in finding any one religion which satisfies, this intellectual satisfaction is not reliable at all. Shall we ultimately fall back on the same organ for our knowledge that we rejected in the case of philosophy? No, either we must find out some other means of knowing the truth, or confess our inability to do so.

Now there are certain things about religion which make it very unsatisfactory for our purpose, and those apply, not to any one religion, but to all religions of the world.

3 Religion gives only second-hand information

Firstly, we see that religion does not give us a personal experience of transcendent truths: it does not yield firsthand knowledge. Some great person, prophet or mystic had some spiritual realization which was recorded in a book. Now we depend for our faith on such writings. We do not have those transcendent experiences ourselves, but remain content with reading the accounts of others.

The saints and prophets had spiritual insight and gained knowledge of transcendent entities, but we merely study their descriptions and rely on second-hand information. Instead of trying to attain their high stage of transcendent intuition and spiritual insight, we merely read their reports and take things on faith. But this is not enough. We cannot get the taste of a sweetmeat by merely reading about sweets, nor can our hunger be appeased by the study of a cookbook.

4 Different interpretations of religious writings

Moreover, the holy books of various religions depend for their explanation on the mercy of individual interpretation, which leaves room for difference and discord. Different people understand and interpret religious writings differently, and there is no way for a layperson to find out the right meanings. We do not know exactly what the writer wanted to convey by his words, and he is not there to tell us what he meant. We therefore understand him according to our own thoughts and read him in the light of our own ideas. Thus what we get is not sure and reliable knowledge, but only opinion and guesswork.

In fact, most of the religious books of the world make use of technical phraseology, and consequently it is difficult to follow them. Only a person who has had proper training and who is

thoroughly initiated into the secrets of divine light and inner realization can understand and explain such writings in a satisfactory manner. Just as a layperson cannot understand technical books on specialized sciences unless he first gets a grounding under a competent teacher, similarly we cannot make out the real import of religious books without the aid of a proper teacher – a person who has himself attained union with God and secured firsthand transcendent knowledge of spiritual secrets and subtle entities.

5 Mere emotion is blind

Further, mere emotion or feeling, which religion inculcates, is blind. It may take us the right way or it may lead us astray. If people find emotion and feeling to be a great help in the realization of God, it is also emotion and the impulse of worldly love and attachment that keeps many from seeking the light of truth. Emotion in itself is blind. It must be guided by true knowledge. A blind person cannot walk with safety unless his vision is restored.

But intellectual knowledge cannot be a right guide to emotion, for intellect is itself unreliable. If one blind person leads another, both may fall into a pit. If intellect leads emotion, they are liable to go wrong. We need some higher knowledge, some sort of transcendent intuition, to direct emotion into the proper channel so that we may be sure of our way. With mere emotion, we are not on safe ground.

6 Religious belief is, in fact, only prejudice

Now, so long as we do not have true transcendent knowledge, what is our religious belief? Is it not sheer prejudice or bias? If there had been only one religion and only one version of the next world, we might have put our faith in that religion with some show of reason, although the belief would still have been blind.

But now when we have so many distinct religions before us, each with its own account of reality, why should we accept the story of one and reject those of others?

Generally we inherit our religion from our birth. We are Hindus if we are born in a Hindu family; we are Muslims and believe in the Prophet Muhammad and the holy Qur'an if we take birth in a Muslim house; and we are Christians and believe in Jesus Christ and the holy Bible if our parents happen to be Christians. In course of time, our ideas become fixed in our minds, and due to long association, our religion becomes but a bundle of deep-set prejudices. We begin in childhood with religious bias, and as we grow up, our prejudices go on getting a firmer and firmer hold on us, till we find them masters over us in our mature age.

If for a moment we think calmly, collectedly and without bias, we shall realize that our so-called religious knowledge is but a string of long cherished prejudices. Our prejudices imprison us, and like mad people we take our jailers for a guard of honour. The prejudice may be wrong; it may be right. That we do not know, for we possess no sure knowledge. If we are on the right path, it is a lucky chance; if we are wrong, then it is our misfortune. But in either case we are ignorant, and our so-called religious knowledge is not true knowledge, but guesswork, conjecture – and prejudice.

7 Religion is within the sphere of intellect

And lastly, as in philosophy so in religion: we ultimately depend, as already pointed out, on the intellect. And if intellect is unreliable, as it has been proved to be, how can religion give us reliable knowledge when it depends on an unreliable source?

If intellect were reliable, it would not change its verdict, which it does so very frequently. Islam may seem to someone to be the true path today, but Christianity may do so tomorrow; and what

guarantee is there that some other religion will not appeal to him the next day? If someone gives up one religion and embraces another, it does not necessarily show the weakness and falsity of the one, nor the strength and truth of the other. It might merely betray the changeful mood of his own mental state. If intellect changes its verdict once, it may do so hundreds of times; and when intellect changes its judgement even once, it is clear that either it was mistaken before or is mistaken now – or it was mistaken both times. Hence the intellect has erred and is therefore always liable to err.

Moreover, we cannot judge the intellect with the intellect. Even if the judgement of the intellect were right, we cannot know this with the intellect. We need some higher faculty to judge this. The reason for this deficiency in intellectual knowledge may be that at the intellectual level we cannot have perfect knowledge of all facts to be able to judge rightly and with certainty; but whatever the reason, it remains a fact that intellect can never give us sure and certain knowledge.

8 Recapitulation and conclusion

So we see that the solutions offered by religion to our fundamental problems are unsatisfactory because:

- Firstly, various religions present conflicting and therefore confusing views.
- Secondly, we cannot study all religions in the short span of human life, and consequently personal study is out of the question.
- Thirdly, religions depend on books, which provide us with second-hand information; instead of the thing itself, they give us only a description of it.

- Fourthly, these books are at the mercy of individual interpretation, which is varying and divergent.
- Fifthly, emotion, which is the chief source of religious inspiration, is in itself blind.
- Lastly, all religions depend ultimately on intellect, which has been shown in the last chapter to be unreliable and uncertain.
- Religious belief is more or less our deep-set prejudice, for in fact we know nothing of transcendent truths. With the intellect, we can never judge the intellect; for true knowledge, we need a higher faculty.

CHAPTER FOUR

Solutions Offered by Mysticism

BEFORE WE DISCUSS the solutions of mysticism, we must first know what mysticism is. Only after making sure of what it is and how it handles our fundamental problems of life shall we be in a position to judge the solutions that it may have to offer.

1 What is mysticism?

By mysticism some people understand a mysterious sort of feeling or instinct or imagination, but mystic insight is entirely different from intellectual imagination and instinctive intuition.

a. Indefinable

How can we define mysticism when it is neither a theory nor a belief, neither reasoning nor guessing, neither a thinking nor a feeling, neither perception nor conception, neither thought nor imagination, neither instinct nor intuition? It is nothing of what we usually experience. It is a spiritual concentration that leads one beyond the senses and intellect into a superconscious state of ecstatic rapture, into a kind of heavenly transport, which yields an immediate personal transcendent knowledge of absolute reality.

Philosophers look upon mysticism as a theory of philosophy, but it is not a theory at all. It is that inner spiritual superconscious realization or revelation that transcends all the ordinary human faculties and is above and beyond sensation and perception, thinking and imagining; it is beyond all our intellectual knowledge. For that transcendent light to dawn, thought itself must be suspended.

Mystic insight is looking within into the subtle realms of the spirit. It is an unfolding of the deep reality of one's being and an unveiling of the profound mysteries of the universe. It is a flight of the soul into rarer regions of pure spirituality and a beaming forth of the hidden light of truth from the innermost core of existence. It is the transcendent experience of an individual in a condition of divine ecstasy, which cannot become the object of thought. It is a direct spiritual intuition which evades all intellectual grasp. How can we then define it? How even describe it? It is beyond all thought and imagination; it is purely spiritual and transcendent. But it lays bare to our soul the deep reality of all things and shows in its essence the absolute truth of all times.

Mysticism opens to our inner being a mysterious music that proceeds from the deep recesses of existence, a mysterious light that emanates from the bosom of transcendence, a mysterious inspiration that draws its breath from the fountainhead of life. But the intellect cannot know that inspiration, the eye cannot see that light, nor can the ear hear that music. Only the soul realizes the subtle transcendence in an immortal moment of spiritual intoxication. Only in a maddening ecstasy of divine illumination does the soul rise on the wings of transcendent love to the spiritual heights of subtler spheres. Only in a transporting rapture of transcendent knowledge does the soul embrace the universal eternal one – absolute, real, true, blissful, the source of all being and existence, the fountainhead of all life and light.

Thus mystic intuition transcends all thinking and imagining; it leaves behind all definition and description. Pen cannot write it, tongue cannot utter it, words cannot convey it, and language

cannot express it. Yet it is there – the inexpressible reality of all realities, the unutterable truth of all truths. Of that transcendent knowledge, Kabir says:

लिखा लिखी की है नहीं, देखा देखी की बात ॥

It is not a matter of writing and reading,
But of actual seeing.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p. 77

Mystic knowledge defies expression, for it does not deal with things of this world, which are known to everybody, but concerns subtle transcendent entities, which are beyond ordinary experience and which have, therefore, no names assigned to them by the world at large.

भीखा बात अगम की, कहन सुनन की नाहिं ।
जो जाने सो कहे ना, कहे सो जाने नाहिं ॥

The secrets of transcendence cannot be uttered;
O Bhikha, who knoweth doth not say,
Who saith doth not know.

BHIKHA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

We may talk of mystic knowledge and spiritual transport, but the actual state of spiritual realization and ecstatic rapture cannot be reduced to words. That transcendent knowledge cannot be had save through actual experience.

सूरदास समझ की या गति । ज्यों गुंमो गुड़ खायो ॥

Of the knowing person the condition, O Surdas,
Is like a mute person who hath eaten sweets.

SURDAS, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Neither can speak about the joy of the experience.

ਕਹਿਬੇ ਕਉ ਸੋਭਾ ਨਹੀ ਦੇਖਾ ਹੀ ਪਰਵਾਨੁ ॥

Saying mattereth not; seeing alone counteth.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Thus truths of mysticism are, strictly speaking, indescribable. Unfortunately, in this world we have no other means of expressing ourselves to others except language, and even mystics have to make use of this vehicle, although it is not adequate for their purpose. Consequently, all effort to convey mystic knowledge through words falls far short of its desired end, and to a layperson, mystic writings must give but a dim and vague notion of that which is in reality beyond notions.

b. Transcendent

So the first thing that we have to understand about mystic insight is that it is not within the sphere of the intellect or the senses. Mystic knowledge is beyond intellect, for it is an immediate transcendent experience of subtle spiritual reality by the soul; it is a direct realization of God, independent of all thinking and reasoning.

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥ ...
ਸਹਸ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Into thought he cometh not,
Even if thou thinkest millions of times....
Whatever amount hast thou of wit,
There it availeth thee not a bit.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1

God can be known only when we go out of our body and mind, so to speak, when we transcend the physical and mental worlds and with a subtle faculty of the soul rise higher into purely spiritual realms.

Although strictly speaking it is not a faculty, let us, for the sake of convenience, denote that power, attribute, quality or essence of the soul or spirit, by means of which we can know the ultimate reality directly, by the term *faculty of transport*. It can be roused and made active in various ways, but before we come to mystic methods, let us first make clear what this faculty is and how it gives us solutions to our fundamental problems.

Independent of the five senses and the thinking mind, transport is a flash of direct revelation; it is a sort of spiritual intuition, a transcendent insight that carries one altogether beyond the reach of ordinary experience, taking one into an ecstatic rapture of spiritual enlightenment. Mystics know the ultimate reality by a direct personal experience of it on higher planes of consciousness than that of waking. In transport we know and embrace reality; in the waking state we perceive only phenomena. Transcendent knowledge of God, which is open to mystic intuition, is beyond the grasp of reason.

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।
आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् । न बिभेति कदाचनेति ॥

The knower of that bliss of Brahm* –
The place from where speech cometh back,
Along with *manas* (mind), without finding access –
Feareth none.

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD 2:4:1

* See the Glossary for explanations of technical or Indian-language terms, mythological or scriptural characters or gods, and terms with unusual usage that are not footnoted.

God and all other transcendent entities are beyond intellectual grasp. We cannot know our soul or spirit by merely reading or thinking.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो ।
न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ॥

The spirit is found
Not by the study of the scriptures,
Nor by intellect, nor by much learning.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:2:21

By mystic transcendent insight alone can the soul be realized. Only through mystic transport can the ultimate reality be perceived; only the soul can behold the glory of God.

In fact, mystic knowledge is not knowledge in the ordinary sense: it is a spiritual transcendent experience, which is different from our ordinary experience, not only in degree but in kind. Mystic knowledge belongs to an order or category which is quite distinct from the knowledge of this world. It is a transport of the soul from the material creation into the astral, causal or still subtler spiritual realms; it is an unanalyzable, transcendent, ecstatic intuition which reveals reality to the soul, bathed in divine lustre.

That divine light, that spiritual ecstasy, that superconscious rapture, that direct realization of truth, that intuitive knowledge of reality, that oneness of soul with God, that identification of the individual with the universal, that flash of the concentrated essence of the transcendent, that brilliance of the focused radiance of the absolute – it shows all things in their true colour and all phenomena in their naked reality. It swallows up all finite facts into itself, in its higher truth and unity, and shines on its own: single, supreme, unanalyzable and indivisible, omnipotent and omniscient, all-spreading and all-comprehending, all-penetrating

– and yet all-transcending, Maya is, so to speak, annihilated in the dazzle of Brahman; phenomena are submerged in the reality of *noumena*; the visible is lost in the invisible; the sensible world is dissolved in the supra-sensible.

Just as the intellect is a higher faculty than the senses, similarly transport is a higher faculty than the intellect. (In fact, as already stated, transport is not a faculty in the generally accepted meaning of the term, but for lack of any better expression, let us call it by this name.) Just as in the waking state we have a higher sort of consciousness than that of sleep, similarly in mystic transport we have a higher kind of consciousness than that of the waking state.

Just as there is no proof of light, colours and forms for those who are born blind, but people with eyes see them and need no proof, similarly there is no proof of mystic knowledge for the world at large, but mystics themselves, who experience the transport and ecstasy, need no proof. Just as blind people cannot understand the difference in colours except through sight, similarly laypersons cannot understand mystic knowledge except by awakening their faculty of transport. Just as the sun exists although bats and owls supposedly cannot see it, similarly transport exists although we may not be aware of it.

We are spiritually ignorant and blind. By denying mystic knowledge, the faculty of transport and the subtle spiritual regions, we only betray our own ignorance. If we do not know of a thing, we should not jump to the conclusion that the thing does not exist. Our ignorance cannot serve as a proof for its non-existence. Even if we have never experienced transport, we have no right to say that it is an impossibility. At best we can say that we do not know. We can take up a neutral position. But to deny it outright would be extreme presumption on our part, for it would imply that we know everything in the universe. We can never know all things of the universe at the level of the intellect, and consequently we should never hasten to deny the existence of a thing.

What shall we say to a blind person if he tries to prove by reason and argument that light and colours do not exist? We shall merely smile at his blindness and ignorance, and if we are sympathetic we might try to cure his eyesight and show him light and colours. Similarly what would a mystic think of us if we tried to prove to him that there was no faculty of transport and no transcendent knowledge? He would simply laugh at us, for transport is a greater reality for him than anything else. And because mystics are tender-hearted, they take pity on us and invite us to get our faculty of transport awakened. But blind as we are, we go on telling them obstinately that there is no such thing as transport. Transport exists, and is its own proof.

Just as somebody who gets up from sleep needs no proof to know that the waking condition is different from sleep, and that being awake is a state of superior consciousness, similarly the person who experiences mystic transport knows, as a fact of immediate consciousness, that the state of transport is different from the ordinary waking state and that mystic consciousness is of a higher order than waking consciousness.

One who feels pain needs no proof of its existence: the feeling itself is its proof. One who tastes delicious dishes requires no proof of their delicious taste: the experience of that taste is the best proof of its existence and sweetness. Similarly, but with a greater certainty, the person who experiences transport knows, as an immediate fact of consciousness, that transport is a reality which leads one to higher and subtler spheres of extreme bliss and beatitude.

قوم گفتند اے گرد و مدعی کو گواہ علم و طب نافعی

People say: O you who claim to possess
Transcendent knowledge, have you any evidence
Of your superhuman science and curative skill?

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

And the mystics answer:

تو بگوئی آفتابا کو گواه گویت اے کو راز حق دیدہ خواہ

Questionest thou, "O Sun,
Where is the evidence (of your rising)?"
Replieth he, "O thou blind man,
Pray thou to God for sight."

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:2720

c. Transport open to all

Now, this mystic faculty of transport is present in all human beings, but they are not aware of it because it is in a latent or dormant condition. It is sleeping, so to speak.

भीखा भूखा को नहीं,
सब की गठड़ी लाल ।
गिरह खोल नहीं जानते,
ता ते भये कंगाल ॥

None is poor, O Bhikha!
Everyone hath rubies in his bundle,
But how to open the knot he doth not know
And therefore is he a pauper.

BHIKHA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Mystics have opened the knot and obtained the rubies of transcendent truths. They are poor no longer. Their spiritual power has been aroused, their inner eye has been opened, and they see reality face to face – or rather we should say that those who have awakened this dormant faculty of the soul are called mystics, for this faculty or capacity is there in everyone and can be awakened through proper training.

d. Mystic realization

Thus mystic realization is not an intellectual understanding; it is a transcendent experience which to be known must be had practically. "In order to understand Sufism (Islamic mysticism) thoroughly," says al-Ghazali, "one must combine theory with practice." The last stage in Sufism cannot be reached by mere instruction, but only by transport, ecstasy and the transformation of the moral being. Sufism, like any other kind of mysticism, requires practice to transform one's moral being in the initial stages, so what shall we say of the highest goals of mysticism, which take the devotee above the sphere of morality, transporting the devotee beyond good and evil into realms of absolute truth and transcendent reality?

बिन देखे बिन दरस परस बिन, नाम लिये का होई ॥
धन के कहे धनी जो होई, निरधन रहै न कोई ॥

What doth it avail thee if thou utterest His name,
But has seen Him not, nor hast thou touched Him?
If mere talk of wealth could make people rich,
Then none would remain poor.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.3, P.47

लिखा लिखी की है नहीं, देखा देखी की बात ॥

It is not a matter of writing and reading,
But of actual seeing.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.77

गली नैगु ठ रैयी ॥

Yoga cannot be had by talking or theory.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.730

We cannot form an accurate idea of mystic knowledge except by following the mystic path. It is not only a knowing but essentially a seeing – seeing completely, thoroughly and intimately – on a plane above the level of the intellect and beyond the perception of the senses. Nay, it is not even a seeing: it is a becoming – it is to become the very truth that we want to know, it is to enter with our soul the transcendent ultimate reality as it is in its essence and being, and it is to know that supreme reality by becoming that reality ourselves.

2 Mystic knowledge

a. Subtle perception

Now, to look at the thing from another point of view, let us see how we acquire knowledge in this world. Leaving aside a priori principles, we acquire knowledge in two ways: firstly, by immediate experience, which contains its truth in itself and needs no arguments or outside authority to prove it. Such is sensation or perception. Secondly, by inference from our knowledge of immediate experience.

Now, it is obvious that knowledge obtained by immediate experience is more reliable than that which is inferred from it. But this more reliable knowledge is also of several kinds. We can have such immediate experience at different stages or levels of consciousness:

- in dreams, *swapan* (स्वप्न)
- in a waking condition, *jaagrat* (जागृत)
- or at a still higher level or plane of consciousness, above and beyond the senses and intellect, *turiya* (तुरिया)

It is evident that the higher the level of consciousness where immediate experience is had, the better, more certain and clearer shall be the knowledge gained.

Mystic knowledge may thus crudely be called perception on subtler spiritual planes by subtler spiritual faculties of the soul. Just as the human soul experiences phenomena and perceives material things in the physical world by means of physical organs, similarly on higher subtle spiritual planes the soul has transcendent experiences by means of its subtle spiritual organs or faculties, if we may put it so.

द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यदब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति
 परा चैवाऽपरा च ॥ ४ ॥
 तत्रापरा ऋग्वदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्ववेदः
 शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति ।
 अथ परा यया तदक्षरमघिगम्यते ॥ ५ ॥

Two different kinds of knowledge
 Are there to know:
 The transcendent and the ordinary.
 The Vedas – *Rig, Yajur, Sam* and *Atharv* –
 Grammar, etymology, metre and astrology,
 All these are ordinary knowledge;
 And the transcendent is that by which
 One reaches the Imperishable Being.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD 1:4:5

b. Sheaths on the soul

The whole creation is not only of one kind, physical; there are many other kinds of subtle worlds also, different from this material world – astral, causal and spiritual – although we know only the physical universe. Similarly we have not only one kind of body, physical; we have other subtle bodies also, which are different from this physical frame, such as astral and causal bodies, although we are conscious only of the gross physical body.

خویشتن را تو ز آب و گل شناس که تو ز یس آب و گل قباداری

Know thou thyself distinct
From the material elements of thy body,
For these are merely thy cloak.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.381

Mystics tell us that these bodies are only sheaths or covers on the soul, which hide its light and conceal its bliss. We have to remove all these covers before we can attain those spiritual realms, which are the highest planes of consciousness and from where, we are told, the primeval creative impulse originates and proceeds.

3 Transport is beyond psychology

Psychologists usually include mystic experience in their psychology, but it is not a psychological phenomenon in the ordinary sense of the world. It is a supernatural state of transcendent consciousness; it is a superhuman experience of absolute reality.

a. Transcendent experience

In the first place, psychology deals with human consciousness; mysticism leads us into superhuman consciousness. Mystic insight differs from the waking condition not only in degree but also in kind. Transport opens a new kind of creation to our eyes. It is not the physical eye that sees things of transport; it is the internal spiritual transcendent eye of the soul which views pure reality in a moment of universal consciousness.

Psychology concerns itself with this world and phenomena; mystic transport takes us into other subtler spiritual worlds and gives us transcendent knowledge of *noumena* or reality. Psychology is confined to consciousness at the physical and mental level;

transport pierces the veil of gross matter and reveals astral, causal and subtler spiritual planes in a flash of transcendent light. Psychology works at the level of the intellect; transport shuts up all thinking and reasoning in order to open the innermost recesses of the soul and to see absolute reality face to face. It transcends all limitations of reason and intellect.

How can those laws which govern finite human consciousness be applied to the superhuman and transcendent intuition of the mystic? How can rules of the common person be applied to the superman? Just as mechanical laws cannot explain mesmeric and spiritualistic phenomena and miracles, similarly, but with a greater force, the principles of psychology cannot explain mystic transport.

With all the advance that it has made in recent years, psychology cannot give a satisfactory account even of dream and hallucination. And if it cannot explain even such low states of consciousness merely because these do not fall within the norm – the waking state – how can this science presume to explain states of super- and ultra-superconsciousness, which are far, far superior to and altogether different from the waking state?

b. Beyond the duality of subject and object

Secondly, mystic transport is beyond the fundamental duality of psychology. Psychology assumes at least two entities for any knowledge to be possible at all – the subject and the object. In ordinary consciousness there can be no knowledge unless there is a distinct subject and a distinct object. But mystic knowledge knows no duality; it shines in its own oneness.

Transport transcends the psychological limitation of the duality of subject and object. In mystic rapture, the subject knowing and the object known are not two, but become one. In psychological knowledge one entity or being perceives another thing or being; the object here is always another. In mystic transport, we

know and enter reality; the object here does not remain another, but becomes identical with the subject. We know the ultimate reality by becoming that reality ourselves.

In mystic knowledge oneness reigns supreme; there is no scope for another. The other of psychology is absorbed, comprehended and transcended in the unanalyzable unity of mystic insight. The ultimate reality is one, and when we enter the realm of transport, we lose our own separate existence in the oneness of that absolute reality.

دریں دریا کہ من ہستم نہ من نہ دریا ہست نہ اندر چ س اس سر کمر آ غلو ہائیں باشد

In the ocean that I am, neither am I nor is the ocean.
But none knoweth this secret
Save one who hath been thus himself.

FARID-UD-DIN ATTAR, *DIVAN-I ATTAR* 227:4126

हद कहूँ तो है नहीं, बेहद कहौं तो नाहिं ॥
हद बेहद दोनों नहीं, चरणदास भी नाहिं ॥

If I say that he is limited, that he is not;
Say I limitless, nor is he that.
Limit nor limitlessness,
Neither is there, nor even Charandas.

CHARANDAS, *SHRI BHAKTISAGAR*, P.311

Further, psychological consciousness differentiates between various things: it sees manyness and is analytical, so to speak. Mystic transport unites different finite bits of experience into a real whole and reveals true oneness; it is thus synthetical. But this synthesis is not intellectual, but transcendent and spiritual.

Psychology views only phenomena and deals with various fragments of experience; transport looks at the whole of reality

and grasps the essence of its oneness in a moment of eternal consciousness. To give a crude simile, we may say that psychological consciousness deals with the various switches of electric installations which move fans, light up lamps and do other work, but mystic transport controls the machinery that works the dynamo. Psychology is confined to appearance, to the world as it appears to us, to bits of finite phenomena; mystic transport comprehends the whole of reality in one pulse of transcendent consciousness.

c. Mystics themselves are the best judges of this question

Lastly, let us consider who should decide whether mystic transport is or is not a psychological phenomenon. Obviously not the person who has experience of only one of these. Those who have never experienced transport are not in a position to compare the two.

The person who has experienced both psychological phenomena as well as mystic transport is the right person to judge. He knows both and he can compare. Such a right judge is the mystic himself, for he lives not only on the physical plane, but also on higher subtler planes. He knows what psychological phenomena are and he has also experienced mystic transport. Hence mystics alone have a right to say whether or not their transport is a psychological phenomenon in the generally accepted meaning of the term.

We are not in a position to speak on the matter for we see only one side. Our experiences are limited to psychological phenomena only. We have never had transport. We know nothing of mystic knowledge. How can we then pass judgement on it? How can we speak of a thing we know nothing about? How can we compare it with other things? It betrays our utter ignorance and lack of vision when we presume to gauge the infinity of mystic transport with the ruler of our psychology.

Once there was a tortoise living in a well, when another tortoise came from the sea. The tortoise of the well questioned the

other as to the extent and size of his sea. The other replied that it was vast. The first tortoise made a leap and enquired if the sea was that big and was told that it was much bigger. He made another leap and enquired again, and then another jump, and so on, till he completed the whole circuit of the well, but was invariably given the same answer. The poor tortoise of the well was at its wit's end to understand this, for he could not imagine any pool of water to be bigger than his well. At last he said to the other: "There is no such thing as the sea. You are telling a lie, or you are under a delusion." The tortoise of the sea simply laughed at the folly and narrow mental vision of his companion and kept quiet, for he could not prove his point to such an obstinate and blind fellow.

Similarly, we cannot think of mystic transport as anything beyond our psychological phenomena. We are tortoises of the well; how can we understand the tortoises of the sea? Let them say whatever they like, but we must disbelieve them and include their limitless ocean of mystic transport in our small well of the intellect. We must persist in thinking that mystic knowledge is a psychological phenomenon, howsoever strongly and clearly they may tell us that it is not.

We then conclude that these mystics must be deluded, for they talk of things which we have not experienced and which consequently cannot exist. This is indeed strange logic that tells us to infer the non-existence of a thing from our ignorance of it. We are not only ignorant of mystic transport, but we are also ignorant of our own ignorance. Our general knowledge is our general ignorance, and an ignorance, unfortunately, unconscious of itself.

If an illiterate person sits in judgement on Shakespeare and his art, we shall consider him a great fool and attach no importance to his words; similarly, if those people who have never experienced transport and consequently know nothing of it pass their verdict on mystic knowledge, their views are not worth noticing. Only a thorough student of Shakespeare can give us correct criticism

of him; only an adept in mysticism can tell us the ins and outs of mystic transport; only he can say if his transport is a psychological phenomenon or otherwise.

And as all mystics with one accord assert that mystic transport is not a psychological phenomenon, we shall have to admit that it is not. Mystic knowledge and ecstatic transport should never be confused with mental processes. Let it be made quite clear, however, that what is beyond psychology is the actual state of mystic transport, not any thinking or talking of it.

4 Not blind emotion or nothingness

Nor is mystic insight mere blind emotion or feeling, for feeling is guided, sublimated, elevated and transformed in mystic transport by transcendent insight. Religion lays great stress on feeling, but religion is still at the mercy of the intellect. Mysticism thus begins where religion ends, for mystic knowledge opens where thinking and reasoning close.

Nor is it nothingness. People say that if mystic intuition is a suspension of all thinking, then it must be nothing, for absence of thought means a vacant mind, a non-entity. But as already stated, this reasoning is fallacious. Mystic knowledge is not nothing; it is a greater something than all thought. Just as we stop our physical senses from doing their work and we think, similarly in transport we stop our thinking processes also and we know – know through the transcendent faculty of the soul.

If somebody shuts his eyes, that does not necessarily mean that person has no consciousness or possesses no knowledge. He or she may be thinking on a great and serious problem. The external eyes may be shut, but the mental eyes may be open, and one may be absorbed in serious meditation. Similarly if we suspend our thinking along with the shutting of external sense organs, it does not follow that we have no consciousness or knowledge. We may

be having transcendent experience. Our soul might be awake and busy in more serious work than it can do at the intellectual level.

5 Mystic transport: direct realization, not imagination

When ordinary people sleep, they go to a state of lower consciousness – dream or sound sleep, but when mystics sleep they go to a state of higher consciousness – the transcendent consciousness of the astral, causal, causal-spiritual or spiritual planes. Their physical body sleeps, their intellect and mental faculties also sleep, but their soul is awake and sees and knows – that seeing and knowing being superconscious and transcendent.

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ॥
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

That which is the night of all beings
For the mystic is the time of waking;
When other beings are waking,
Then is it night for the sage who seeth.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:69

گفت پیغمبر کہ خُشد چشم من لیک کے خُشدِ دلم اندرون

“Sleepeth my body”, saith the Prophet,
“But sleepeth not my soul within me.”

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1226

ਓਇ ਜਾਗਤ ਰਹਿ ਨ ਸੁਭੈ ਦੀਸਹਿ ॥

They ever remain wakeful;
Never are they seen asleep.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1025

The sage is awake to things to which the ordinary person is asleep, and the eyes of the sage are open to truths shut out from the common vision, while that which is real for the masses is illusion for the sage. Mystics live in the light of truth and reality; worldly people grope in the darkness of delusion and phenomena.

Mystic knowledge is a direct realization of truth; it is not mere imagination, for this too works at the level of the intellect. Moreover, imagination cannot yield entirely new knowledge; it can only give us new combinations of various parts of our old experience. Imagination performs a twofold function – analysis and synthesis. First of all it analyzes or breaks up old experience into small bits, and then it combines or synthesizes these bits in novel ways.

Thus although imagination is creative, inasmuch as the new thing created by it is, as a whole, entirely new; yet it is not really creative if we consider the different parts of that new thing, for every part of it is already known and old. Imagination can never give us a thing which is new in every part. But mystic transport takes us into a different world altogether and brings us knowledge of things which are different from our daily experience, not only as a whole but also in each part, and not only in degree but essentially in kind.

Further, a coinage of our brain or a production of our imagination cannot bring about a vital change in our very being or essence as people. Mysticism, on the other hand, transforms us into purely spiritual and superconsciously blissful entities, for it is true knowledge of absolute reality. That dawning of transcendent light, that rapture of mystic ecstasy, bridges the wide gulf between the finite and the infinite; it is the touch of heavenly alchemy that changes the base individual into the divine universal.

ਲਾਲੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਾਲ ਕੀ ਜਿਤ ਦੇਖੋਂ ਤਿਤ ਲਾਲ ।
ਲਾਲੀ ਦੇਖਨ ਮੈ ਗਈ ਮੈ ਵੀ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਲਾਲ ॥

Whichever way the eye turneth, it beholdeth
 The refulgent glory of the beloved Lord;
 To see that divine radiance did I go,
 And even I myself was dyed in that glory.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.107

Whoever goes into transcendent regions to behold the glory of God, himself becomes that glory and that God. This is the magical charm of mysticism and that glory; it transforms mortals into divine beings.

6 Recapitulation

Thus we see that mystic insight is indefinable and transcendent; it is beyond the reach of the intellect and senses. It cannot be expressed in language; it cannot be conveyed through ideas. It is a practical experience in a state of heavenly ecstasy; it is a super-conscious intuition in a flight of spiritual transport.

In addition to the physical universe, there are other kinds of creation also, such as astral, causal and spiritual. Similarly, human beings have other bodies besides the physical – their astral and causal bodies, which they must discard in order to shine as the real self, the spirit. Mystic knowledge may be described as perception in higher subtler spiritual worlds by means of subtler bodies or the liberated soul.

Every human being is capable of experiencing mystic transport. This capacity or faculty is present in all humankind, although in most it remains in a latent or dormant condition all their life.

Mysticism is beyond the sphere of psychology, because it transcends the fundamental duality of subject and object. Here the subject knowing and the object known are not two distinct entities, but become one; the individual knows the universal by becoming identical with the universal.

Nor is mysticism blind emotion, for feeling here is sublimated and guided by the transcendent light of transport. Nor is it nothingness. Our ignorance of its existence cannot serve as a proof against its reality. Mystic transport and realization remain a solid fact, whether we believe in them or not.

Mystic transport is a direct realization of God. It is not imagination, for imagination is only an analytic-synthetic process of the mind. Mystic insight, on the other hand, is no process at all: it is a direct flash of spiritual light that reveals to us the true essence of all being and existence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion of Part One

WE HAVE SEEN that there are certain problems of vital importance which arise with the very dawn of consciousness and demand a solution, that philosophy, religion and mysticism offer their various solutions, and that it is within the scope of mysticism alone to deal with these fundamental problems. They involve questions about transcendent truths, and mysticism alone can handle transcendent entities.

I Mysticism and philosophy

It is a wonder that philosophers include mysticism among philosophical theories. As has been pointed out already, mysticism is not a theory at all; it is outside the realm of philosophy. Philosophy deals with theories, while mysticism deals, not with theories of reality, but with reality itself.

The mystics realize and see face to face with the eye of the soul, and enter by their spiritual being, and know their oneness with that absolute and ultimate reality, of which the various philosophical theories are but attempts at description and analysis. Philosophy deals with theories and its organ is intellect; mysticism deals with reality and its organ is transport. The one is ordinary

knowledge, the other is a transcendent awakening; the one is an intellectual knowing, the other is a spiritual becoming.

In the light of the certain, absolute and transcendent knowledge of the mystic, philosophical theories are sheer guesswork. They are merely possible explanations or descriptions of reality, but reality is a thing apart.

اسم خواندی روشنی را بجو مہ بالا داں نہ اندر آب جو

Thou hast read the name;
O go and seek thou the being
Whose name it is.
Know thou the moon in the sky,
Oh, look not for it in water.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:3457

There you have only its reflection.

बिन देखे बिन दरस परस के नाम लिये का होई ।
धन के कहे धनी जो होई निरधन रहै न कोई ॥

What doth it avail thee if thou utterest His name,
But has seen Him not, nor hast thou touched Him?
If mere talk of wealth could make people rich,
Then none would remain poor.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.3, P.47

To know hygiene – to know all the principles necessary for preserving health and to know the theory of health – is different from being healthy. It is one thing to know ethics and the theory of moral good, and another to be really good. To talk of riches is quite distinct from actually possessing wealth. This

is the distinction between philosophy and mysticism. They are poles asunder. The one theorizes at the level of intellect, the other knows at the plane of spirit; the one is at best the name or description of a thing, the other is the thing itself.

ایک نظر دو گز ہی بیند زراہ یک نظر دو کون دید دُر وے شاہ
در میان ایں دو فرق بے شمار سر مہ بُجو واللہ اعلم بالسرائر

One sight seeth only two yards ahead,
And one sight beholdeth
Both these worlds and the Almighty.
How vast is the difference between the two!
O seek thou that collyrium which openeth to thee
The hidden mysteries of God.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:1464-1465

The eye of intellect can see only the two yards of phenomena, but the inner transcendent eye of transport views the whole of infinite reality in one eternal moment of universal consciousness. Philosophy gropes in the dark for definitions and descriptions, but "with mystics," says al-Ghazali, "repose and movement, exterior and interior, are illumined with the light which proceeds from the central radiance of inspiration," and things revealed to them during their spiritual flights are "impossible to recount". By means of the mystic practice "they rise by degrees to heights which human language cannot reach, which one cannot even indicate without falling into great and inevitable errors. He who does not arrive at the intuition of these truths by means of ecstasy or transport knows only the name of inspiration."

Generally, when we consider the writings of a great author of the past, perhaps under the widespread influence of the theory of

evolution, we try to trace the development of his ideas from his predecessors and of their ideas from their predecessors, and so on. We study the thing from what is sometimes called the historical standpoint. But mystic knowledge does not consist of ideas and therefore it does not develop from one person to another; it simply dawns in the bosom of an individual and is personal. Every mystic has his own individual experiences, and without that personal transcendent awakening, mystic knowledge is impossible. That knowledge cannot be conveyed through ideas, because it cannot be put into ideas. It is altogether a private, personal transcendent realization.

Moreover, mystics may or may not be poets. A mystic is essentially and in the first place a mystic; he may also happen to be a poet. Perhaps generally he becomes a poet because poetry yields to him the best means available for giving vent to his feelings and experiences. But he does not use exaggeration or hyperbole; he speaks the truth as best he can; he actually and really means all that he utters; he tries to put what he experiences in his mystic rapture and transport into the most appropriate words he can find. We should not take his statements to be hyperbole, nor attach too much importance to his linguistic style. We should rather try to grasp his meaning. He tells us only what he sees with his own inner eye and hears with his own inner ear.

ਸੰਤਨ ਕੀ ਸੁਣਿ ਸਾਚੀ ਸਾਖੀ ॥
ਸੋ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਜੋ ਪੇਖਹਿ ਆਖੀ ॥

O listen thou to the true testimony of saints,
For they utter what they behold.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.894

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥
ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ ॥

As cometh to me the word of the Lord,
So do I speak to thee, O Lalo!

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.722

a. Mysticism gives true knowledge

Mystic insight is free from those defects which we find clinging to intellectual knowledge. Mystic knowledge does not change: it is ever constant, the same at all times and for all people. It alone deserves the name of knowledge, for it is sure and certain. There is no scope for doubt in it. Further, it is effective in action; it guides and controls our whole life; it becomes part and parcel of our being. Whatever we know through mystic transport, we must abide by. It has in it the power to make us act according to its dictates.

Mysticism cures us of all spiritual ailments and liberates us from all subtle evils. When light dawns, darkness disappears; when knowledge appears, ignorance vanishes; when bliss comes, pain fades away. Mystic enlightenment removes all our weaknesses and makes us spiritually strong. The flood of mystic love washes away all our dirt and filth; the storm of mystic bliss drives away all our doubt and suspicion; the sun of mystic knowledge dissipates all our delusion and darkness; nothing is left but the naked truth beaming in its own radiance, the absolute reality glowing in its own refulgence.

چوں بہ بیندو حق ایمن شود ز اضطرابات شک اوسا کن شود

As he holdeth the light of Truth,
Therefore hath he peace
And deliverance from the pangs of doubt.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

b. Mysticism opens our inner eye

Mysticism does not dictate like philosophy or religion. It only opens our inner eye so that we may see for ourselves; it only gives

us the light by which we may perceive things in their true colour; it only awakens our transcendent power of perceiving the deep reality of things, and then leaves us to form our own judgement by a firsthand knowledge.

आप आप को आप पछानो । कहा और का नेक न मानो ॥

Know thou thyself by thyself;
Believe not at all what others say.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 24:1:62

It is our own individual personal experience of mystic transport that brings us certain and reliable knowledge. It is seeing with our own inner eyes and hearing with our own inner ears.

जब देखें हम अपने नैना । तब मानें सतगुरु के बैना ॥

When with my own eyes do I behold,
Then shall I accept what the Satguru saith.

TULSI SAHIB, *GHAT RAMAYAN*, VOL.1, P.103

ਜਬ ਤਕ ਨ ਦੇਖੂੰ ਅਪਨੀ ਨੈਨੀ ।
ਤਬ ਤਕ ਨ ਪਤੀਜੂੰ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀ ਬੈਨੀ ॥

Until with my own eyes do I see,
The word of the Guru satisfies me not.

GURU NANAK, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

In mysticism we are not required to take things for granted or remain content with mere theoretical understanding. An intellectual grasp of the salient points may help us in doing the mystic practice properly and successfully, but the real object of all mystic

training is to have practical realization of transcendent truths and a firsthand experience of subtle entities.

2 Dying while living

Mysticism teaches us how to cross the gate of death even during our lifetime and see for ourselves all that is hidden beyond. It is quite true that no ordinary person comes back after death to give us news of the next world, but mystics die and come back to life every day. As liberated souls, they freely roam about in all the subtle planes. Thus they can tell us about the other world and help us at our death in our journey to those regions.

If we also manage to go, as soul, into the subtle planes during our lifetime, we can also see the other world before our death. This is what mysticism does for us: it teaches us how to die and go into the other world before our final death, see transcendent truths, unveil hidden mysteries, and then come back into the physical body.

ਨਿਤ ਨਿਤ ਮਰਾ ਤੇ ਨਿਤ ਨਿਤ ਜੀਵਾਂ ।
ਗੁਰ ਐਸੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਬਤਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Every day do I die,
And every day do I come back to life:
Such is the method my Guru hath taught me.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

جاں بے کنڈی واند پرده زانکہ مردن اصل بدعا ورده

Death's agony didst thou suffer (in meditation);
But still art thou behind the veil, for true death
(Which consisteth in dying while living)
Thou didst not experience.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:723

We cannot worship God in the true sense until by crossing the threshold of death, we reach his durbar and see him face to face. By means of mystic transport we come to know where we are going and what arrangements we can make for our final journey.

ਮੁਇਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਤਿਤੁ ਜੀਵਦਿਆ ਮਰੁ ਮਾਰਿ ॥

Where people goeth after death,
Die thou into that realm while living.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.21

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀਵਤਿਆ ਮਰਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਐਸਾ ਜੋਗੁ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥

Such a mystic practice
Do thou follow, O Nanak,
That thou diest even while living.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.730

ਮਰਿਏ ਤੋ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਝਏ, ਛੂਟਿ ਪੈਰੈ ਜੰਜਾਰ ।
ਏਸਾ ਮਰਨਾ ਕੋ ਮੈਰੈ ਦਿਨ ਮੈਂ ਸੌ ਸੌ ਬਾਰ ॥

If die we must, then let us die
And be rid of this world;
But such a death a very few die
Hundreds of times in a day.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P.56

This is mystic dying, and mystics can go into subtle worlds hundreds of times during the day.

3 Mysticism and religion

And what does religion do for us? It gives us only promises of heaven and hopes of salvation, while mysticism takes us into the

very heart of life and freedom. Religion offers us but a sham consolation; mysticism gives us true realization. Religion is more or less a concern of this world; mystic transport takes us to the next world and opens to our spiritual vision those hidden secrets of the essence of Being, which are beyond both salvation and bondage, beyond all duality and relativity, and above all pairs of opposites.

In fact, religions of today lay stress on moral and social reformation rather than on spiritual enlightenment; they do not reveal God to us, nor impart knowledge of transcendent entities.

Religions depend on books and writings, but books do not contain God. They only attempt to give us an idea of him. Just as a bank passbook does not contain money, merely an account of it; just as a book of medicine does not contain medicine, merely prescriptions for their use; just as the engineer's book does not contain the material – bricks, wood, iron, etc. – only a description of them; similarly God and other transcendent entities are not in books. These contain merely descriptions of mystic transport and accounts of transcendent knowledge.

Religions can impart to us at best an intellectual understanding of their own version of reality, but reality is a thing apart. For reality or God himself we should go to mystics, who give us not only the best theory of reality, but more importantly, God or transcendent reality itself. Religion may satisfy those who depend on sheer faith, but for all true seekers, for all who desire true enlightenment and true happiness, for all who want to know absolute truth and transcendent reality, mysticism is indispensable.

علم جوئی از کتب ہائے افسوس ذوق جوئی تو ز حلوائے سبوس

Seest thou knowledge in books?

Alas, dost thou find relish in a pudding of chaff?

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:3578

زنج مدرسه حافظ مجوی گوهر عشق قدم بروں نہ اگر میل جستجو داری

In schools seek not the pearl of love, O Hafiz;
Step beyond, if a desire for it you cherish.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P. 414

God is not in books; he is with mystics. If we are anxious to find him, we should seek the company of those who have realized him themselves, instead of wasting our time in the study of books.

گفت پیغمبر کہ حق فرمودہ است من نہ بنجم ہیچ در بالا و پست
درد دل مومن بنجم اے عجب گرم راخواہی از اں دلہا طلب

Said the Prophet, God telleth me:
"I live not high nor low....
Wondrous it is! In the heart
Of the believer (mystic) do I live,
And if me dost thou desire,
In his heart do thou seek."

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2653, 2655

مسجدے ہست اندرون اولیاء سجدہ گاہ جملہ ہست آنجا خدا

The mosque is inside the mystics,
And there resideth God for the homage of all.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:3111

When we want to learn English, we go to those who know this language themselves. An illiterate person cannot teach us. To learn the art of painting, we go to painters and not to carpenters; the latter can teach us only carpentry. Hence if we want to know

God and realize the ultimate truths of life, we should go, not to those people who are themselves ignorant and blind, but to those whose internal eyes are open and who see, who can look through phenomena or maya into the transcendent reality beyond.

For God, we should go to mystics, for they know him; they know the ins and outs of the subtle and complicated path of spiritual realization and are well acquainted with the intricacies of transcendent flight. Our preachers and lecturers are themselves spiritually in the dark – how can they lead others on the right path? They have no light themselves – what light will they show us?

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितमन्यामानाः ।
जड्बुद्ध्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

Engulfed in ignorance, but looking
Upon themselves as wise and learned,
The fools go round the wheel of reincarnation
After death, like one blind person led by another.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD, 1:2:8

It is only the one with sight who can keep us on the right track, for he sees; it is only the mystic who can take us to God, for he knows. Religion cannot take the place of mysticism, for it primarily teaches us how to deal with people here in this world. Mysticism, on the other hand, takes us to the other world where we can talk to supernatural beings and make a home for ourselves in the transcendent regions of the absolute.

Religion simply looks with gaping eyes at phenomena and wonders, and infers the existence and attributes of God by argumentation and reasoning. Mysticism transcends all reasoning, removes the veil of phenomena, and reveals the true glory of God. Religion in vain taxes the frail intellect, for God and other

transcendent entities forever remain beyond its grasp. Mysticism removes the cover of intellect, and lays bare to the eye of the soul the very core of absolute reality.

Religion gropes blindly in the dark for truths which it cannot perceive; mysticism beholds in the supremely radiant light of ecstatic transport the very essence of pure truth. Religion guesses, surmises, conjectures and reasons; mysticism experiences, understands, grasps and comprehends. Religion thinks and feels; mysticism sees and knows. Religion lives on hope; mysticism embraces realization. Religion promises heaven; mysticism takes us above heaven into the spiritual realms of eternal bliss. Religion is in the affairs of this world; mysticism transcends time and space and comprehends all being and existence in one pulse of transcendent consciousness.

Mystics have no religion; strictly speaking, they are free people. They are bound by no forms or ceremonies, no rites or dogmas, no outward shows of religion. They are above the bondage of caste, creed and nationality; they are citizens of the world – nay, they are denizens of the whole universe, for through devotion and love they have merged their individuality in the universality of the Absolute One and realized their oneness with the Eternal Being.

مذهب عشق از همه دین‌ها جداست عاشقان را مذهب و دین خداست

Different is the religion of love from all creeds,
For the creed and religion of lovers is God himself.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 11:1770

4 Need of a living adept

To tread the path of mysticism we need a teacher. Without the Master to lead us, we are liable to go astray and lose our way in the intricate labyrinth of the subtle spiritual planes. Moreover, it is not possible to find access to the transcendent world without the help of an adept.

So a living guide is indispensable. By ourselves we cannot move even an inch. We stagger and stumble; we know not the way. But the mystic guide goes into subtle spiritual planes himself and can take others also into those transcendent regions. His own eyes are open and he sees, and he can open the spiritual eyes of others as well.

वस्तु कहीं दूँदैं कहीं, केहि बिधि आवैं हाथ ।
कहै कबीर तब पाइये, जब भेदी लीजे साथ ॥

The thing is in a certain place
And thou seekest it somewhere else –
How can it come into thy hands?
Only then canst thou get it, O Kabir,
When thou takest a knowing person with thee.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.5:59

भेदी लीन्हा साथ कर, दीन्ही बस्तु लखाय ।
कोटि जनम का पंथ था, पल में पहुँचा जाय ॥

A knowing person did I take with me,
And he showed me the real thing.
The journey of millions of lives
Was performed in no time.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.5:60

Mystics lay stress on this point again and again. Without the guidance of an adept we can never know God, even if we go on trying for centuries; it is the mystic adept who opens our inner eye of transport and shows us God in this very life.

For achieving anything whatsoever two things are essential – movement and right direction. If we are not on the right path, then the more we go, the farther we may be from our ideal. Hence it is essential that we first make sure of the path we take. And if

we go with an expert, we shall be safe under his guidance. He will take us to our destination quickly and comfortably. The teacher is a necessity in every profession and department, in every trade and art, but he is most essential in mystic practice.

مرثرا عقلے ست جزوی در نہاں کامل العقلے بجواندر جہاں
جوڑو از کُن اُدگی شود عقل کل بر نفس چوں غلی شود

Since imperfect and hidden is thy sense,
Therefore seek thou in this world
One with perfect sense, so that thy partial sense
May become complete through his perfection
And overcome thy passions.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Our sense is liable to err, but the wisdom of the mystic is faultless and immaculate, and he alone can guide us in the mystic school of transcendent wisdom. He is that guide and friend who always remains with us. It is not his body which is Guru. Guru is the inner spirit which remains with us for our help on all spiritual planes and which is, in being and essence, one with God. But it manifests itself on this physical plane in the form of a human being.

As we are at present human beings, we stand in need of a human Guru. Just as for our education we need a contemporary teacher and for our ailments we need a living doctor, so we need a living, contemporary mystic for our spiritual training. It matters not whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, a Christian or a Jew, a Sikh or a Parsi. Let him belong to any creed or caste or religion, for that is only a social necessity, but if his inner eyes are open, if he has awakened transport and realized God, he will serve the purpose.

مردِ تجی ہمرہ حاجی طلب خواہ ہندو خواہ ترک دیا عرب

Whoever goeth on a pilgrimage
Needeth a pilgrim as a companion,
Be he a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:2894

a. Mystics are our friends, even after our death

Mysticism is the path of love and devotion; only through love can we get rid of our egoism and behold the light of truth. Mystics alone are worthy of love; they are our true friends, not only here, but more fundamentally in the astral, causal and subtle spiritual planes. They receive us in the astral plane at the time of our death and guide us to safety in high spiritual stages. Mystics alone are our real friends, for worldly friends desert us even in this life, but mystics leave us not even after our death.

ਨਾਨਕ ਕਚੜਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਤੋੜਿ ਢੁਢਿ ਸਜਣ ਸੇਤ ਪਕਿਆ ॥
ਓਇ ਜੀਵੰਦੇ ਵਿਛੜਹਿ ਓਇ ਮੁਇਆ ਨ ਜਾਹੀ ਛੋੜਿ ॥

Break thou off with the false friends
Of this world, O Nanak,
And find out a saint who will be thy true friend.
The former leave thee in thy lifetime,
But the latter desert thee not even at thy death.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1102

If a true mystic adept has received a seeker into his fold and initiated him, then even if the adept departs from the world and ceases to exist in the physical body, still he will help his disciple internally with his astral Radiant Form and higher subtler spiritual power.

b. Preparation for the last journey

This is what we can do against death: we can take refuge with saints or mystics, who alone can save us from the agonies of death

and the tortures of hell and can protect us from all dangers here and hereafter.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਸਉ ਕਰਿ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਉ ਲਾਇ ਚਿਤੁ ॥
ਜੇਮਣ ਮਰਣ ਕਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਕਟੀਐ ਤਾਂ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਵੀ ਮਿਤ ॥

Make thou friends with the Gurmukh
And be thou devoted to Satguru;
Thus cut asunder the chains of birth and death
And then shalt thou attain eternal bliss, O friend.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1421

5 Conclusion

a. Mysticism is a pressing need

Thus we see that mysticism is the most vital concern of life. To attain the transcendent insight of the mystic and realize the deep essence of things; to penetrate phenomena and understand the profound secret of the world in the innermost recesses of the absolute; to fly up to Olympian heights in the bosom of the transcendent and merge the drop of our individual existence in the limitless ocean of the Supreme Being; to fathom the depth of all truth and reality by the plumb line of the pure soul in a state of superconscious ecstasy; to shake off all gross and subtle covers from the spirit and let it shine in its own genuine and beaming lustre; to see with the inner eye, hear with the inner ear, be in the being of absolute life and live in the light of eternal existence – this is what mysticism teaches us, and this is what we ought to do in this human life.

If we do not want to grope in the dark like blind people, if we do not want to be driven irresistibly by the whirlwind of this unknown and awful material world, then we must open our inner

eyes, we must look before we leap, we must see before we move, we must be awake before we act and we must know before we do.

Some people look upon youth as a time for enjoyment and indulgence in sensual pleasures and would postpone mystic research to old age when the passions subside. But they are sadly mistaken, for who can be sure of a long life? Time and tide wait for no one; people die at all ages and in all places. Not only do old people pass away, but children and young people also succumb to death.

ਨਹ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਨਹ ਜੋਬਨੈ ਨਹ ਬਿਰਧੀ ਕਛੁ ਬੰਧੁ ॥
ਓਹ ਬੇਰਾ ਨਹ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਜਉ ਆਇ ਪਰੈ ਜਮ ਫੇਧੁ ॥

Neither in childhood nor in youth
Nor in old age, no binding is there;
The angel of death comes unawares
To snatch us away.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.254

Human life is short and uncertain; we cannot afford to lose time for we know not when we may be called away. A day passed lazily is not a day lived but a day lost. When we are full of fresh vigour and youthful energy, when we have zest in action and keenness for work, we are blinded by passion and dissipate our time, money and energy in sensual pleasures. However, when our hair turns grey and we have one leg in the grave, then we vainly long for that strength and vigour, that fervour and enthusiasm, which are the possessions and privileges solely of youth.

यावत् स्वस्थमिदं कलेवर गृहं, यावच्च दूरे जरा,
यावज्जेन्द्रशक्तिर प्रतिहता, यावत् क्षयो नायुषः
आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विदुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्।
प्रोद्दीपतेभुवने तु कूपखननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः ॥

As long as this body is healthy,
 As long as old age is far,
 As long as the strength of sense is intact,
 As long as there is life and vitality,
 So long should a wise man
 Make great efforts for his spiritual welfare.
 What is the use of trying to dig a well
 When the house is on fire!

BHARTARI HARI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਜਰਾ ਰੋਗੁ ਨਹੀ ਆਇਆ ॥
 ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਕਾਲਿ ਗ੍ਰਸੀ ਨਹੀ ਕਾਇਆ ॥
 ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਬਿਕਲ ਭਈ ਨਹੀ ਬਾਨੀ ॥
 ਭਜਿ ਲੇਹਿ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਸਾਰਿਗਾਪਾਨੀ ॥

As long as old age and disease have not appeared,
 As long as death has not taken hold of thy body,
 As long as the power of speech has not been impaired,
 So long do thou meditate on God.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.1159

We yearn for more time at our death and would sacrifice all for a few more seconds of life. Many and important are the things which we neglected when there was ample time, which we would do now at all costs. But it is too late; the guard has blown the whistle and the train is already on the move.

What can we do when our struggling soul is hanging between this world and the next, when our fate is balanced between life and death? When we had time we spent it recklessly in idle gossip and frivolous pursuits. But now the time is gone. We should not put off until tomorrow what we can do today, for this postponement has disappointed many a one. We go on delaying and hoping to do the thing tomorrow, but that tomorrow never comes.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *MACBETH* V:V:2376-2380

Let us not wait for tomorrow, let us gird up our loins and seek access to spiritual transcendent realms today and now. Let us be human beings, not cowards.

برودریش معنی پوشیراں چہ گرگ و روبہ و گفتار گشتی

Go thou into the forests of reality like a lion;
 Oh, why hast thou turned into a wolf, a hyena, a fox?

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.401

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

BIBLE, *1 CORINTHIANS* 16:13

b. True renunciation

It is said that to find God we have to renounce the world. This, however, does not mean that we should give up all worldly activity and run to jungles. The world is to be renounced not with the body but with the mind. We have only to take our mind from worldly thoughts and desires.

Body is inert and dead; it can do nothing by itself. If the mind is under our control the body can rebel no longer. It is the mind that is to be trained. Our selfish desires are in the mind, and it is the mind that is polluted by them and needs purification. The body should not be tortured for no reason. When we succeed in turning out the desires and attachments of the world from our

mind, then we have truly renounced the world, even if we are in the thick of worldly life. On the other hand, sitting at the top of the Himalayas we have not renounced the world if worldly desires still cling to us.

वनेऽपि दोषाः प्रभवन्ति रागिणाम्

Evils overcome the worldly minded even in a forest.

MAHABHARATA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

c. *Life is precious*

Mystics who know these things tell us that this life of ours may be compared to a footpath on the side of a hill. On one side is the high peak where our home is situated, high and dry, far removed from all storms and tempests, beyond the reach of mists and clouds, shining in the charming and clear light of the spiritual sun. On the other side is a deep valley where the furious stream of anxiety rushes headlong to the sea of misery. The banks of the stream are sloping towards the water and are overgrown with prickly but beautiful-looking shrubs.

Now there are two courses before us – either we climb up the hill with the help of an expert, reach our eternal home of peace and bliss and share everlasting life, or tempted by the external beauty of the shrubs, we slip down, get our hands bruised by stones and our body pricked by thorns, and finally fall down deep into the ravine.

The winding way that goes up the hill and looks so rugged is the mystic path that seems so difficult and dreary at the start, but which ultimately takes us to our true home in the bosom of God. The apparently beautiful shrubs, which hide prickly thorns, are worldly attachments and sensual desires that entrap us in their meshes and, although pleasing in the beginning, gradually drag us down into misery and sorrow.

On the footpath with us are a few expert climbers, the mystics, who reach the top in the twinkling of an eye, who invite us to go with them, who look after us all the way and see us safe in our true home at the peak.

As the way to our true home is the upper one, which though steep and zigzagging is still safe with an expert guide, let us come under his shelter and loving care and entrust ourselves to his charge. Let us go home now; we are already halfway up. Human beings are at the top of all physical creation, and God can be realized only in this life form.

d. Look within

He is within us and should be sought for within and nowhere else.

Ye are the temple of the living God.

BIBLE, 2 CORINTHIANS 6:16

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

BIBLE, LUKE 17:21

ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਆਪੇ ਵਸੈ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ ਲਖਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥

Within the body doth he himself reside,
The invisible, transcendent being.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.754

e. Seek the mystic adept

The mystic can make him visible to our inner eye.

چشم روشن کن ز خاک اولیا تا به بنی زابتدا تا انتہا
نرمه کن تو خاک بگریده را ہم بسوزد ہم بسازد دیدہ را

Enlighten thou thine eyes
 With the dust of mystics' feet,
 So that all, from infinity to eternity,
 Thou mayest behold.

Apply thou the collyrium of the dust
 Of the feet of the accepted one.
 It will both burn thy eye and do it good.

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM* IV, P.321, *MASNAVI* IV:3375

گر عیاں خواہی ز خاک پائے ایشاں سُر مہ ساز ز آنکہ ایشاں کو ر مادر زاد را بخین کنند

If seekest thou sight, apply thou
 The collyrium of the dust of his feet,
 For even to those born blind doth he give sight.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I KEBIR: BAHR-I REMIL*, M8A:343

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਘੋਰ ਅੰਧਾਰਾ ॥

Without Satguru all is pitch

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1275

ਸੰਤਾ ਕੀ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਸਰੀ ਏਹੁ ਅਚਾਰਾ ਸਿਖੁ ਰੀ ॥

Be thou a slave to mystics;
 Learn thou this mode of life.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.400

PART TWO

A Peep Inside

CHAPTER ONE

Power of Mysticism

I Introduction

a. Mystic light

To review: mystic knowledge is a transcendent experience – a subtle condition of spiritual transport and ecstasy, an ethereal state of the soul in its naked refulgence, a merging of the drop of individual existence into the limitless ocean of universal life, an identification of one's finite being with the all-pervading eternal infinite. It is the concentration of human consciousness at the centre of absolute truth, the focusing of one's spirit at the source of divine inspiration.

Mystic transport is beyond all words and expressions. Just as light and colours cannot be defined for a blind person, similarly transport cannot be explained to a layperson. It is the flight of the soul into subtle transcendent regions of spiritual ecstasy; it is the identity of a human with God in a moment of superconscious rapture. It is beyond the concerns of intellect and senses.

It is, however, inherently present in every soul, for every human being can experience transport, but in most people it is in a sleeping, latent or dormant state. As it remains potential or dormant all their life, they do not even come to know of its presence.

We can awaken this transcendent faculty of ours with the help of a mystic and free our soul of its gross and subtle covers, letting it shine in its native lustre. Then shall we experience superhuman bliss and know the ultimate reality of life.

In mystic transport all sensation and thoughts are suspended and the soul beams forth in its own inherent radiance. That transcendent light illumines the dark recesses of one's being; that transcendent flood washes away all dirt from one's mind; that transcendent bliss drives away all sorrow from one's heart.

Transport exists and is its own proof; no other proof is needed. When the soul pierces the veil of phenomena and peeps into the depths of *noumena*, it sees transcendent secrets in the divine light of spiritual rapture. When we state a truth we want the authority of a higher truth to prove it, but what authority can we cite to prove the validity of the very highest truth? Transport is the truth of all truths; it is the proof of all proofs and therefore is itself beyond all proof.

Mystic transport is the fountainhead of life and existence; it is the ultimate source of all consciousness and being; it transcends all finite understanding and human conception; it wants eternal consciousness to know it; it requires universal insight to see it; it needs transcendent faculties to grasp it. Thus transport exists, although intellect cannot know it, just as the sun shines, although bats and owls apparently cannot see it:

While asleep you assume your dreams to be indisputably real. Once awake you recognize them for what they are – baseless chimeras. Who can assure you then of the reliability of notions which, when awake, you derive from the senses and from reason? In relation to your present state they may be real, but it is possible also that you may enter upon another state of being which will bear the same relationship to your present state as this one does to your condition when asleep.

In that new sphere you will recognize that the conclusions of reason are only chimeras. Sufis call this condition ecstasy or *hal*, a state in which, absorbed in themselves and in the suspension of sense perceptions, they have visions beyond the reach of intellect. Just as the person possessed only of discrimination rejects and denies the notions acquired by reason, so do certain rationalists reject and deny the notion of inspiration (or transport). It is proof of their profound ignorance.

A person born blind, who knows neither by experience nor by information what colours and forms are, cannot know nor understand them when someone speaks to him about them. We can have a glimpse of the idea of inspiration (or transport) from dreams in which we see things and hear sounds without the aid of our senses. As reason constitutes a particular phase of existence in which intellectual concepts are perceived that are hidden from the senses, similarly transport is a special state in which the inner eye, the eye of the spirit, discovers mysteries, revealed by a celestial light, mysteries beyond the reach of reason.

We can give no other description of mystic transport except to say that it is a kind of knowledge that cannot be attained by reason. The little that we know of the nature of transport we owe to the kind of likeness to it which we find in sleep; without that we should be incapable of comprehending it.

AL-GHAZALI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

b. Intellect and transport

Every human faculty has its own sphere in which it works. The ear relates or responds to sound and the eye to light. How foolish would it be if someone tried to hear with his eyes and see with his ears? And yet through ignorance we all fall into such an

error. Intellect and transport are two distinct faculties. Intellect works on the physical plane and helps us in gaining knowledge of the things of this world. Transport works on the astral and still subtler planes and takes us face to face with transcendent entities. The one deals with phenomena; the other reveals reality. We should not try to use intellect for work which is the proper sphere of transport and which transport alone can do. God, soul and all transcendent entities belong to the domain of transport and are forever beyond the reach of reason. But we strain the intellect to yield such transcendent knowledge, for we are unaware of the higher faculty of transport.

(1) *What is beyond intellect is not nothing*: Sometimes we argue that whatever is beyond the grasp of intellect is non-existent, but this is a very unreasonable position. To say that a thing is beyond human intellect, that it cannot become the content of human thought, is not equivalent to saying that it is nothing, that it does not exist. There may be things which by their nature cannot be understood by intellect. It is not against reason if such things exist.

Just as our sense organs work within certain definite limits, so does our brain. Our ears can hear only those sounds which are within a fixed range of pitch and intensity; our eyes can see only those things which are within a definite degree of brightness; similarly our intellect works within a limited sphere. Sounds beyond the fixed range are inaudible to our ears; things which are too dazzling or too dim are invisible to our eyes; thus, also, transcendent truths evade the grip of reason, for they are too subtle. But as sounds which the human ear cannot hear may and do exist, as light which the human eye cannot see may and does exist, so too transcendent entities do exist, although the human intellect cannot know them.

چوں بشنوی سخن اہل دل گو کہ خطاست سخن شناس نہمہ دلبر اخطا اینجاست

When to the talk of a mystic thou dost listen,
 Say not that it is wrong;
 Thou thyself knowest it not,
 And the fault is in thee, O friend.

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM* IV, P.31

(2) *Spiritually we are blind*: Our sense organs and intellect render us useful service in this world, but before the transcendent wisdom of mystic transport, they are useless.

پیش شہر عقل فکی ایس حواس پوں خزان چشم بستہ در خراس

Before the city of perfect wisdom
 These senses are like the donkeys in the oil-press,
 Whose eyes are blindfolded.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:523

A blind person tries to take the work of seeing from the other sense organs, but cannot see. He may grope his way in the dark, but he has no vision. If he really wants to *see*, he must have his eyesight restored. Similarly, we cannot know reality through intellect. For that our faculty of transport must be awakened. Spiritually we are blind and in the dark.

چوں ز حس بیرون نیامد آدی باشد از تصویر غیبی انجمی

So long as a person cometh not out of his senses,
 Ignorant of transcendent entities doth he remain.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1028

(3) *Condition in transport*: In the state of mystic transport, physical organs and intellect cease to work as they do in sleep or in a trance; reflex movements may go on, but all conscious activity

is suspended. But while in sleep or in a trance, we have either very low consciousness or none at all; whereas in transport our soul awakens to the superconscious light of transcendent truth.

بہر نازش بستہ اود و چشم سر عرش و فرشتش تجملہ در زیر نظر

In the dream of transport,
His external eyes doth the mystic close,
But beholdeth he all heaven and earth.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

2 Mystics and death

Mystics have solved the riddle of death. They do not only live in this material world, but essentially live in the blissful realms of transcendent spirituality. Every day they come down into the body to do their work here and then return to their true abode in the higher spiritual planes.

खाट तुलाई दसवें द्वारा, तहां करूं विसरामा ॥

My bed and bedding are in Daswan Dwar;
There do I repose.

KABIR, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Daswan Dwar is the stage of Parbrahm, above and beyond Brahm or Om.

a. Mystics help at our death

If we take refuge with the mystic adept, he will not forsake us at our death but will appear in his Radiant Astral Form, save us from all pain and lead us higher up into the region of eternal bliss,

even if he himself has by that time cast off the physical frame. His Radiant Astral Form remains with the disciple to help him in going into the higher planes.

ਨਾਨਕ ਕਚੜਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਤੋੜਿ ਢੂਢਿ ਸਜਣ ਸੰਤ ਪਕਿਆ ॥
ਓਇ ਜੀਵੰਦੇ ਵਿਛੜਹਿ ਓਇ ਮੁਇਆ ਨ ਜਾਹੀ ਛੋੜਿ ॥

Break thou off with the false friends of this world,
O Nanak, and find a saint who will be thy true friend.
The former leave thee in thy lifetime,
But the latter deserteth thee not even at thy death.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1102

ਸਜਣ ਸੇਈ ਨਾਲਿ ਮੈ ਚਲਦਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ਚਲੰਨਿ ॥
ਜਿਥੈ ਲੈਖਾ ਮੰਗੀਐ ਤਿਥੈ ਖੜੈ ਦਿਸੰਨਿ ॥

That friend have I with me, O Nanak,
Who goeth with me at my death;
And where one has to render account,
There is he seen standing by me.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.729

ਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਨਾਲੇ ॥

Guru is with me and ever he remaineth with me.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.394

Mystics do not let their disciples appear before the judgement seat or suffer pain.

تراپرو ز حساب ایں امر شود معلوم کہ بود سلطنت بحساب درویشی

This shalt thou know on Judgement Day:
That the kingdom of mystics
Hath to render no account.

HAFIZ, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

b. Radiant Astral Form of the mystic adept

In fact the Radiant Form of the mystic adept is already waiting at the portal of the astral plane to receive the soul of the disciple. If the disciple is devoted, heart and soul, and performs the mystic practice keenly and earnestly, he will find access into the astral plane and meet the Master inside.

Ask, and it shall be given...knock, and it shall be opened
unto you.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 7:7

But even in case we fail to knock during our lifetime, and death bursts the gate open, at the threshold of the astral plane we find ourselves in the warm lap of our beloved Guru.

c. Death of the initiated and the uninitiated

Those who find shelter at the holy feet of the mystic adept meet such a happy end. This body is a sort of prison for the soul, but the initiated are not afraid to go out of it, for they fly up to blissful realms. From a dirty dungeon they go into a palace.

بُرج زنداں را شکست اراکائے
بچاؤ و نجات دہندہ دل زندائے

If the sentry breaketh the turrets of the prison,
Shall that at all grieve the heart of the prisoner?

RUMI, MASNAVI V:1715

He would rather be happy to be freed from bondage.

ਅਫਰਿਓ ਜਮੁ ਮਾਰਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥
 ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦੇ ਨੇੜਿ ਨ ਆਈ ॥
 ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣੇ ਤਾ ਦੂਰਹੁ ਭਾਗੈ
 ਮਤੁ ਮਾਰੇ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹਾ ਹੇ ॥

The furious angel of death cannot be killed,
 But by the Word of the Master he cometh not near.
 On hearing the Word from a distance
 Doth he run away, lest the Absolute Lord
 Should annihilate him.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1054

If we love the mystic adept, he certainly saves us from peril and pain.

ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਿਉ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ
 ਸੁ ਖਾਲੀ ਕੋਈ ਨਾਹਿ ॥
 ਤਿਨ ਜਮ ਕੀ ਤਲਬ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ
 ਨਾ ਓਇ ਦੁਖ ਸਹਾਹਿ ॥

Whoever loveth Satguru, empty-handed
 He doth not remain; no summons doth he receive
 From the angel of death, nor doth he suffer pain.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.516

The uninitiated also enter the portal of the astral plane when they die, but quite a different fate awaits them. They suffer extreme agony at death, and after that they find no relief, but fall into the clutches of the angels of death, who take pleasure in tormenting and torturing their victims.

چند کو بد زخمیائے گر زشاں بر سر ہرثا اژدہا مر زشاں

On the head of every non-believer
Shall fall the violent strokes of their mace.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:112

ی برندش مے سپورندش بہ نیش کہ برواے سگ بہ گہداں ہائے خویش

They drag him along and prod his body
With goads, and say to him,
"Go, dog, go thou into the filthy pit
Of thine own making."

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:1816

A mystic disciple's dying is thus very different from a worldly person's dying: one sails on the quiet calm waters of a beautiful lake; the other faces the rough breakers of a stormy sea.

d. Why the death of a mystic's disciple is a time of bliss for him

The death of the disciple of a mystic is a time of happiness because one then finally flies up into the everlasting bliss of spiritual regions.

कबीर जिसु मरने ते जगु डरै मेरे मनि आनंदु ॥
मरने ही ते पाईऐ पूरनु परमानंदु ॥

That death, which terrifieth the world,
Maketh me happy; for death alone, O Kabir,
Taketh us to the blissful Lord.

KABIR, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1365

تلخ بودیش ایساں مرگ تن پوں رونداز چاہ و زنداں درجن

To him bitter is not the death of the body;
For from a well and imprisonment
Goeth he into a garden.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:1713

حجاب چہرہ جاں می شود نہایت
خوشادے کہ ازیں چہرہ پردہ بر فلک

The dusty cloud of my physical frame
Is the veil that covers the face of my beloved.
Oh, happy shall I be when I lift
This veil from that face.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ* P.661, 385:1

ظاہر مرگ و باطن زندگی
ظاہرش اترنہاں پائیدگی

It is apparently death, but in reality life;
Outwardly decay, but inwardly growth.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:3928

e. Intellectual surety

But we do not know these truths, nor are we required to believe in them blindly. Mystics simply invite us to accompany them to the higher spiritual planes so that we may see with our own eyes and know. Seeing is believing.

However, so long as our inner eye of transport is not opened, we can draw an inference from the case of those who have gone before us. As a matter of fact, it invariably happens that just before the time of death of the disciple, the soul is drawn inwards to the astral plane by the spiritual magnetic attraction of the astral radiance of the Master. Thus the disciple comes to have a glimpse of reality and an experience of ecstatic bliss just before leaving this world – and in many cases the disciple relates this mystic experience to those who may be present at that moment.

Now, although for that disciple it is a personal transcendent experience, for others it affords only testimonial proof. It gives them intellectual satisfaction, but mysticism aims at absolute personal knowledge.

f. Mystic certainty

Mystic certainty lies in a personal experience of spiritual reality. Even if we are going to a place of bliss after our death, it does not take us away from our present troubles. If we are hungry we want something to eat here and now. In mysticism, it is not a promise that we want, but realization and attainment. If we are thirsty for divine knowledge, we cannot wait until death and depend on the probable assurance of the intellect. What we want is true and transcendent knowledge in this very life; we want bliss and beatitude now, not after death.

जीवन मुक्ति पलक में पावै । सो संजम हमरे मन भावै ॥
जीवत मुक्ति देखिये आँखी । ऐसी बिधि कोइ कहिये भाखी ॥
एक पहर में मुक्ति बतावै । सो सतगुरु मोरे मन भावै ॥

That method I like
Which bringeth salvation in an instant.
Oh, tell me such a way that with mine own eyes,
while I am alive, I see salvation.
That mystic adept I love
Who giveth salvation in no time.

SAHJO BAI, *SAHJO BAI KI BANI*, P.35

3 Mystics and the world

a. Mystics' greatness

Mystics are too great to be recognized by us, too high to be visible with our stunted vision. Their greatness is too transcendent

to be gauged by human standards. Reformers of the world work chiefly or entirely on the physical plane, but mystics move in higher transcendent realms of pure spirituality. The sun and the moon look so bright and so big because they are near us, whereas some stars, which may be hundreds of times bigger and brighter, can hardly be seen with the naked eye as they are far higher up.

ہست آن ریگ اے پر مرد خدا کو بخت پیوست و شد از خود جدا

Fortunate is that person, O dear one,
Who uniteth himself with God
And cutteth off himself from himself.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

The mystic cuts off the lower self from the real self, kills egoism and attains transcendent union with the Most High. And when the mystic accepts us into his fold at the time of initiation, he takes on himself the responsibility of uniting us with God. This is due to his infinite grace and mercy.

b. Unreality of the world

In fact, as mystics tell us, this world is not real as a physical material world. In the superconscious state of transport and in the light of absolute reality, this gross physical universe loses its distinct existence and being. This world is real only so long as we are ignorant and in delusion; but once we go up above the intellect into the regions of mystic transport, we realize the delusive character of this manyness and perceive, with the inner eye of the soul, the transcendent truth of spiritual oneness.

ਏਹੁ ਵਿਸੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ਤੁਮ ਦੇਖਦੇ
ਏਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਹਰਿ ਰੂਪੁ ਨਦਰੀ ਆਇਆ ॥

This world of phenomena which you see
Is the manifestation of God,
And as such do I behold it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.922

आतम में जागृत नहीं, सुपने सोवत लोग ।
सहजो सुपने होत है, रोग भोग और जोग ॥

Alas! people do not wake up to their soul,
But keep sleeping and dreaming.
All the pleasure and pain of the world, O Sahjo,
Are only a dream.

SAHJO BAI, *SAHJO BAI KI BANI*, P.35

We have not to open our physical eyes to see true existence,
nor strain our mental faculties to yield us transcendent knowl-
edge. To see the world in its naked reality, we have to shut our
external eyes and open the inner eyes of the spirit.

ایں خیال آبادر انتوان بخشم باز دید چشم پوشیدن ز دنیا کار عینک میکند

This delusive world cannot be truly seen
With wide-open eyes;
But closing one's eyes to the world
Doth serve as spectacles.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

कोटि बरस इक छिन लगै, ज्ञान दृष्टि जो होय ।
बिसरि जगत औरै बनै, सहजो सुपने सोय ॥

For the eye of enlightenment.(transport), O Sahjo,
Millions of years are but a single moment;

And this world, which in our dream appears as real,
Dissolveth and turneth into something else.

SAHJO BAI, *SAHJO BAI KI BANI*, p.38

4 Concluding

So we see that to prove the existence of a thing, mysticism gives us the thing itself; to give us knowledge of reality, it brings us face to face with that reality. In that state of ecstasy we penetrate into all the hidden mysteries of life and unveil all the deep secrets of the universe.

Mystic knowledge is thus a personal transcendent experience and cannot be imparted to others through the ordinary means of intellect. Language cannot convey it; human intelligence cannot grasp it. That realization is of a different kind from our experiences of this physical world. Material things bear no resemblance to subtle spiritual entities; they belong to a different order or category altogether.

Moreover, mystic knowledge is not knowledge in the ordinary sense; it is an effect on the soul or a transformation of one's very being. It is not only a knowing, but also a most intimate and spiritual feeling. Nay, it is not even a feeling: it is a transcendent becoming; it is a sort of taste which is confined to personal experience.

We may describe lucidly and in detail the taste and effects of various kinds of sweetmeats or fruit, but by our description someone cannot taste or relish those things. Similarly, whatever we may understand from the words of a mystic, the mere words do not give us that feeling of supreme bliss, that transformation of our being, that relish and taste of transcendent reality, that ecstatic effect on the soul which the mystic experiences in his transport.

भीखा बात अगम की, कहन सुनन की नाहिं ।
जो जाने सो कहे ना, कहे सो जाने नाहिं ॥

The secrets of transcendence
Cannot be uttered, O Bhikha:
Who knoweth doth not say;
Who saith doth not know.

BHIKHA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

CHAPTER TWO

In the Heart of Mysticism

WHEN TRANSPORT is opened, one ceases to have experiences of this material world, but the inner eye begins to see things of the subtle astral plane. One casts off the gross physical covering of this body for the time being, and with the subtle astral body one moves about in the astral plane.

آں توئی کہ بے بدن داری بدن پس مترس از جسم و جاں بیروں شدن

Thou art such as has another body
Different from this,
So fear not to go out of this physical frame.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1613

کیس جہاں چاہیست بس تاریک و تنگ ہست بیروں عالمے بے بود و رنگ

What is this world but a dark dungeon?
And outside existeth another world,
Formless and odourless.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:64

The region of the astral plane is subtler than this material world. Above and beyond the astral creation there are several transcendent realms, more ethereal and spiritual. We have to cast off all gross and subtle covers from the soul and be transported to purely spiritual planes to behold absolute reality.

1 Third eye or tenth door

In the ordinary waking condition, the seat of the soul in the body is at the spiritual focus – midway between the two eyes, just a little above the root of the nose and slightly inwards. The soul has its focus or headquarters here, but from this point it spreads into the whole body and permeates every pore of this mechanism, giving life and energy to every limb and organ.

When a person is awake, the soul as such does not move from this centre, but its rays, being directed downwards into the physical frame, give life to the whole body, just as the sun remains in the sky, but its rays of heat and light envelope the whole earth and sustain all kinds of life here.

This seat of the soul is called the third eye or *tisra til* (ਤੀਸਰਾ ਤਿਲ). The two physical eyes are organs through which we see phenomena of this world, but if we withdraw ourselves into this third eye, it will open to us the transcendent reality of the next world.

Man's five senses are like five doors
Opening on the external world;
But more wonderful than these,
He has a window inside himself
That opens on the unseen world.

AL-GHAZALI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

This window is the seat of the faculty of transport, but the soul is facing downwards and outwards. It is working through

the nine openings in the body – the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, one organ of procreation, and the ninth that of evacuation – and its current is passing outwards through these nine apertures. If we collect all this current of soul energy at its focus, the third eye, which in contradistinction to these external nine openings or doors is also called the tenth door or tenth lane, and turn its face or direction of flow inwards and upwards, then the soul will cease working on the physical plane and, passing through the third eye, will move in the astral and still higher subtler regions.

باش تا مرغ از قفس آید برون تا به بنی هفت چرخ آواز بون

O exert thou to bring the bird out of the cage,
So that it may see the seven heavens above it.

AL-GHAZALI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः ।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेन्मुंजादिवेषीका धैर्येण ।
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥

The self, the inner spirit, ever dwelleth
Within the hearts of human beings.
Patiently separate spirit
From the cover of the body in which it liveth,
Just as thou takest off the sheaths of a bamboo plant.
Spirit knows thee as pure and immortal;
Know thou too: it is pure and immortal.

KATHA UPANISHAD 11:3:17

When mystics draw up their soul from the nine external windows and take it inside into the tenth door, they come out of the cage and go into the land of transport.

ਨੌ ਦਰਵਾਜੇ ਬੰਦ ਕੀਏ ਹੁੰ; ਚਢ ਗਏ ਦਸਵੇਂ ਫ਼ਾਰ ।

Closing the nine doors, I slept;
The tenth have I entered.

BULLEH SHAH, *KULLIYAT-I BULLEH SHAH*, P.292:134

ਨਉ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਕੀਏ ਦਸਵਾ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਰਖਾਇਆ ॥
ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੈ ਲਾਇ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਇਕਨਾ ਦਸਵਾ ਦੁਆਰੁ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ ॥
ਤਹ ਅਨੇਕ ਰੂਪ ਨਾਉ ਨਵ ਨਿਧਿ ਤਿਸ ਦਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Nine doors he manifesteth,
But the tenth keepeth he hidden.
Through devotion to the Guru,
To some he showeth the tenth door,
Where are various forms
And the nine treasures, endless and marvellous.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.922

Wonderful indeed are the things of transcendent regions, for they are subtle and spiritual. And the food of those realms is also spiritual. The world goes after sham elixirs, for the true nectar is found only in the land of transport beyond the tenth door.

ਨਉ ਦਰਵਾਜੇ ਨਵੇ ਦਰ ਫੀਕੇ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਦਸਵੇ ਚੁਈਜੈ ॥

Nine doors there are,
And tasteless are all the nine;
For real nectar droppeth inside the tenth.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1323

So in the mystic practice we have to shut the external nine doors and open the tenth, which faces inwards into the astral plane. This tenth door is, so to speak, the gate between the physical

world and the astral creation. This side is the world of appearances or phenomena, that side the world of reality; this side the world of change, that side the world of permanence.

What we have to do is simply turn in the direction of the soul current. The soul is now looking outwards on the physical universe through the nine doors or the five senses, and its back is towards the tenth door or the third eye. If we manage to collect ourselves, turn around and face the tenth door with our back towards the physical plane, then we shall experience transport and see transcendent entities.

Like the lantern of the guard of a railway train, the soul, so to speak, faces only one side. Its light falls only in front of it; behind it all is dark. But turn the face of the lantern and the dark space is illuminated while the place formerly lit is now thrown into darkness.

ਬੁਲਿਆ ਰੱਬ ਦਾ ਕੀ ਪਾਉਣਾ । ਇਧਰੋਂ ਪੁੱਟਣਾ ਉੱਧਰ ਲਾਉਣਾ ॥

To find God, O Bulleh,
Thou hast only to uproot it from here
And plant it there.

INAYAT SHAH (MASTER OF BULLEH SHAH)
TO BULLEH SHAH: TRADITIONAL

Thus, for mystic knowledge, we have to take away our attention from the world, collect it at the third eye and fix it there.

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयंभूस्तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

Yama (god of death) said,
"The self-born (God) hath set
The doors of the body to face outward.

Therefore, the soul of a person gazeth outward
 And not at the self within.
 Hardly a wise person here and there,
 Desiring immortality, turneth his eyes inward
 And seeth the self within him."

KATHA UPANISHAD 11:1:1

گوش ظاہر ضبط ایس افسانہ کن گوش باطن جاذب اسرار کن

Shut thou thine external ears
 To the tale of this world,
 So that thine internal ears
 May grasp the hidden mystery.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਨਕਢਾਰੇ ਪੂਰੇ ਦੇਹੀ ਹੰਸੋ ਲੇਲਾਯਤੇ ਬਹਿ: ॥

Pent up in this body of nine doors,
 The swan of soul longs to float away.

SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD 111:18

ਨਉ ਦਰ ਠਾਕੇ ਧਾਵਤੁ ਰਹਾਏ ॥ ਦਸਵੈ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਪਾਏ ॥
 ਓਥੈ ਅਨਹਦ ਸਬਦ ਵਜਹਿ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤੀ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਵਣਿਆ ॥

Close thou thy nine doors, and collect thou
 Thy scattered mind in the tenth,
 Which leadeth thee to the true Home.
 There Anahad Shabd (transcendent music)
 Ringeth day and night;
 But only with the help of the mystic adept
 Canst thou hear that music.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.124

That tenth door, or third eye, is known by various names. It is called *shiva netra*, Shiva's eye (शिव नेत्र); *divya chakshu*, divine eye (दिव्य नेत्र); *nuqta-i sa'aida*, the black spot (نقطۂ سودا); and *asht-dal kamal*, eight-petalled lotus (अष्टदल कंकल). As the aperture is very small, Tulsi Sahib compares it to the eye of a needle.

Our external eyes see only phenomena, but this spiritual eye pierces into reality and beholds transcendent entities. If we open this third eye, we shall, during our lifetime, see things of the next world and know what happens after death.

2 Astral plane and beyond

When we are able to enter the tenth door, we roam about in rarer regions, but not with these feet; we see subtle, spiritual sights, but not with these eyes; we talk to ethereal entities, but not with this tongue; and we hear heavenly melodies, but not with these ears. It is a transcendent faculty of the soul which works there.

ہوش را بگذار آنگہ ہوش دار گوش را بر بند آنگہ گوش دار

Leave thou the plane of the intellect
And come to spiritual consciousness;
Close these ears of thine
And open thou true ears.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਅਖੀ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਕੰਨਾ ਸੁਨਣਾ ॥
ਪੈਰਾ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਚਲਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਹਥਾ ਕਰਣਾ ॥
ਜੀਭੈ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਇਉ ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰਣਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਉ ਖਸਮੈ ਮਿਲਣਾ ॥

Seeing without eyes, hearing without ears,
Walking without feet, working without hands,

Speaking without tongue –
 Thus die while living, O Nanak.
 By knowing His will,
 You shall find the Beloved.

GURU ANGAD, ADI GRANTH, P.139

خاموش کن ز گفت و گر گویدت کسے جز حرف و صوت نیست سخن را ادا دروغ

If anyone telleth thee that speech
 Is impossible without words and sound,
 Stop him from saying so, for it is false.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* M4:3127

In the sphere of transport the soul talks and acts without the aid of physical organs and mental faculties.

امیر ربی ست روح و سر خداست ذکر بے کام و بے زبان ادا است

The essence and secret of God is the soul;
 Without tongue and palate doth it talk.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELVI*, P.90

روح را تو حید اللہ خوشتر است غیر ظاہر دست و پائے دیگر است
 روح دار و بے بدن بس کار و بار مرغ باشد و رقص بس بیقرار

Pleasant indeed is the path to the Lord,
 But different and invisible
 Are the hands and feet there.
 The soul worketh without the body,
 For in the cage the bird getteth restless.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

بے پروے پاسفر میکردے بے لب و دندان شکر میخور دے
چشم بسته عالمی دیدے در دوریجاں بے کف می چیدے

Without wings and without feet do I travel there,
And without lips and teeth do I eat sweets....
With eyes closed do I behold that world
And gather flowers and herbs without hands.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2093, 2095

a. *Indescribable*

But what the mystic experiences in those subtle regions and what he actually sees and hears is, strictly speaking, beyond description. When Guru Nanak tells his disciples that God is light, they ask him what sort of light he is. Is he like the moon or the stars? Or does his light resemble that of the sun? Or is it like the dazzling flash of lightning? What is his light? Guru Nanak answers:

ਝਿਲਮਿਲਿ ਝਿਲਕੈ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਤਾਰਾ ॥
ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਨ ਬਿਜੁਲਿ ਗੈਣਾਰਾ ॥

Wondrously doth it glisten, but moon it is not,
Nor stars, nor even the rays of the sun,
Nor yet the lightning of the sky.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1033

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥

Nor doth the sun lighten there, nor moon, nor fire;
Having gone thither, they return not;
That is my supreme abode.

BHAGAVAD GITA XV:6

غیب را برے وآئے دیگر است آسمان وآفتابے دیگر است

In transcendent realms,
Different are the cloud and water,
Different are the sun and sky.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Then Guru Nanak's disciples became impatient and pressed him to say something of that transcendent light. They asked what it was after all. To this the Guru answered:

ਅਕਥੀ ਕਥਉ ਚਿਹਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਈ ॥

Of the unspeakable do I speak,
For it hath no sign.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1033

Such talk from the Guru baffled their wits, and like some modern philosophers they began wondering: If their Guru could not tell them of that light, if it cannot be told at all, then it does not exist. If it is 'not this, not this', then it is nothing. But Guru Nanak sealed their lips with this explanation: It is the whole thing, the real thing. Do not say it is nothing; it is everything. It is the life of everything; it is the essence of all being and the truth of all truths; it is the very ultimate absolute reality. I see it better than anything else; I know it better than I know this world. It is however beyond expression and above the intellect. But say not 'it is nothing', for with my own inner spiritual eyes do I behold it.

ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਇਦਾ ॥

My beloved Lord all doth pervade.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1033

Everywhere is God; he is transcendent yet immanent in the world. But this immanence and transcendence of the Supreme Being, and the existence of subtle, spiritual planes, is hidden from the common gaze.

آنجمان وراہش ار پیدا شدے کم کے یک لفظ ایں جاہدے

If manifest were that world and its way,
Then not even for a minute
Wouldst thou tarry in this place.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

b. Abode of bliss

So blissful are those transcendent realms that if we once come to know of them, all of us would fly to those spiritual planes. But alas, we know them not. And they cannot be known by intellect or reason. Only through actual mystic realization can we have insight into mystic knowledge; only through actual mystic transport and ecstasy can we have a peep into the hidden realms of transcendent reality.

Mystics realize God, know him and enter the essence of his being, but describe him they cannot, for there are no suitable words. God cannot be explained in the language of this world, for there is nothing like him here. He is one without a second. He is in himself and by himself. There is nothing like him by reference to which he may be described. Can we ever describe colours to a blind person? No. Then how can mystics describe God to us? For mystics, we are blind. Blind people must have their eyes opened and see colours before they can understand our description of these things. Similarly we must open our inner eyes of transport and see reality before we can understand the mystics' description of it. The Vedas say of Om or Brahm:

नेति नेति ॥

Not this, not this.

BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD 11:3:6

We may utter any word or give any epithet whatever, but he is not that. He is beyond all words and above all descriptions. Some philosophers conclude from this that he is a non-entity, he does not exist. But this betrays extreme ignorance and presumption on their part. Mystics warn us against falling into this blunder, for they see him, they know him, they are one with him. To them he is the most immediate and fundamental reality. He exists if anything exists at all. He exists if nothing else exists. He is the true and sole reality; all else is an existence of a second order; it is his manifestation or appearance.

ਜਲਿ ਥਲਿ ਮਹੀਅਲਿ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਮਈਆ ਡੀਠਾ ॥

The all-pervading Lord hath Nanak beheld;
In water, on land, everywhere in the world
Doth he live, and in all things.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.671

c. Open only to mystic transport

Guru Nanak has not inferred the existence of God by long processes of argument and reasoning; he has seen him. But, as already explained, it is not the physical eye that sees God; it is the inner eye of transport that can behold transcendent entities. It is not the external ear that hears the heavenly Melody; it is the internal transcendent ear of the soul that can catch the strains of Divine Music.

چشم دیگر بایست تا حسن او دیدن توان گوش دیگر تا کلام دوست بشنیدن توان

Another eye it is that beholdeth his beauty;
A different ear it is that heareth his words.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

لب از حدیث فرو بند گوش جاں بکشا درون پرده دل اسنچ گفتگوست نہیں

Stop thy tongue from speaking
And open the ears of thy soul;
Then shalt thou see what talk goeth on
In the secret chamber of thy heart.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Without finding access to the tenth door, mystic knowledge is impossible; it is only transport that reveals to us the hidden mysteries of life and unveils for us the transcendent secrets of God.

We argue with mystics that God does not exist. We might as well try to prove that we do not exist. What shall we think of a blind person who comes to us in all seriousness to prove that light and colour do not exist? We shall merely laugh at his ignorance and folly. Do we need any arguments to convince us that we exist at this moment? No. Our existence is the most immediate and fundamental reality for us. This is our starting point; all other facts are secondary and depend on this for their validity and truth. If we do not exist, there is no question of other truths; that we exist has for us its truth in itself.

Now mystics are more certain of God's existence than we are of our own. He is the fundamental reality for them and all else is derived. What does it matter if God cannot be described or proved? It does not affect his being; he is still there. He is ever present before the mystic's very eyes; nay, the mystic's very being is one with him. How can they then deny his existence?

Mystics do not want any arguments; they know God as the most immediate fact of transcendent consciousness. He is not to

be discovered; he is already there in the superconscious ecstasy of mystic transport. By removing the veil of ignorance and delusion mystics behold his face, but our egoism hides him from us. Mystics see absolute reality behind appearance; we are confined to phenomena. Mystics realize what is; we perceive only what seems.

ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ਕਾ ਏਕੋ ਠਾਣਾ ਗੁਰਿ ਪਰਦਾ ਖੋਲਿ ਦਿਖਾਇਓ ॥

But one source is there of all planes and universes,
And by lifting the veil hath my Guru shown it to me.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.205

Through mystic transport the veil is lifted and absolute reality beams forth in all its innate glory and splendour. In a rapture of divine ecstasy the soul of the mystic flies up into subtle worlds, beholds the radiant face of the Lord and becomes one with him in his true essence and being.

آنچنان کہ عارف از راهِ نہاں خوش نشسته می رود و در صد جهان

Even sitting quietly at home, the mystic goeth
By a hidden path to hundreds of worlds.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:4132

Leaving his body behind in this world, the mystic's soul goes into all subtle spiritual realms and sees hundreds of worlds in one moment of universal consciousness. His eye of transport is open and he beholds both heaven and earth in one pulse of eternal consciousness. The whole of creation, the very bosom of ultimate reality, lies unveiled before him like an open book.

This physical universe is but a small portion of the total creation. There are numerous other universes of different kinds, some far bigger than this. Beyond the tenth door is the astral plane,

which is vast, and above that is the causal, which is much bigger still. Above and beyond the causal creation we have to cross several subtler regions before we reach the highest and most transcendent spiritual stage.

Compared with the infinite vastness of that ultimate stage, our whole universe is but a drop; it dwindles into insignificance before the tremendous hugeness of that final plane. Even millions of such universes as ours would not make a millionth part of that grand spiritual realm. Of the very last and final reality, none can speak. What it is, who can say? It is altogether beyond our ken at the level of the intellect. Reason can find no access there. Only the pure soul can know and enter the absolute, transcendent reality. Everything else is too gross to enter there.

Never mind that highest spiritual stage, we can in fact hardly imagine or comprehend even the lowest plane of subtle creation. We fail to understand mystics when they refer to those planes, for they talk of things which are no part of our experience. Only that person who is thoroughly initiated into their secrets can grasp the significance of their words.

3 Mystic allegories

So, for two reasons, mystic language is hard to follow. Firstly it is, so to speak, technical; common words are used in a special sense. Secondly, language, which is invented for use in this world of phenomena, proves very inadequate for expressing mystic truths of subtle, transcendent reality. Hence when mystics attempt to put their knowledge into words, they but half succeed; for though such words are quite intelligible to other mystics, they do not convey much to a layperson.

This imperfect communication is, however, no defect in mystic knowledge itself; it is due to our ignorance and to the very nature of the subject. Are there any words to explain forms and colours to the

blind? No. Then whose fault is it? Surely not of the people who see. It is the blind who lack vision. Similarly, in mysticism, if anybody is to blame, it is we. The fault is ours, for we are spiritually blind. It is our own ignorance that stands in the way of our understanding; otherwise mystics are quite clear and plain to the initiated.

We do not understand mystic allegories. Mystics state their experiences of higher planes in terms of things of this world, for there is no other way, but we take them too literally, and thus what is in fact a transcendent truth of superconscious ecstasy turns in our hands into an intellectual absurdity. We might mention a few cases to illustrate the point.

a. Thousand-headed serpent

The Hindu Shastras state that the world rests on a thousand-headed serpent, *shesh naag* (शेष नाग). People generally take this to mean that this globe of ours rests on the head of a serpent and laugh at the foolish idea. But this is in fact a mystic truth of transcendent significance; it refers not to the physical plane but to the astral. This serpent does not mean any serpent of this world; it stands for a conflux in transcendent regions, where one thousand spiritual currents meet. That centre or focus is also called the thousand-petalled lotus, *Sahansdal Kamal* (सहस्र दल कंवल), and it is the focus from which emanate all those forces and currents of spirituality that give life and energy to the physical world.

In this graded scheme of creation, from purely spiritual regions to the causal, then the astral and last of all the physical, it is so arranged that although each stage looks complete in itself, it depends for its sustenance and existence on the plane just above it. Thus the causal world gets its strength and energy from the spiritual regions, and the astral plane depends for its power and support on the causal. Similarly, if we come one step farther down, we find the physical creation supported by the astral, inasmuch as the source of all energy in the physical universe lies on the astral plane.

Now, this Sahansdal Kamal, or Shesh Nag, is the focus of one thousand spiritual rays or currents of energy, and is thus a thousand-headed serpent. As his focus is the reservoir of all energy that is used in this material world of ours, and is thus the final support of the physical universe, we may rightly say that the world rests on a thousand-headed serpent. Such a great spiritual truth has been interpreted to mean a physical impossibility and rank absurdity, only because we do not know the reality of things.

Most of the Puranas contain accounts of transcendent truths, but as they are written in the form of stories and allegories, we fail to understand them. We look upon them as mere mythological anecdotes, the outcome of the extravagant imagination of an ignorant age. But in fact we ourselves are ignorant. Those stories are not false; simply we are blind. To one initiated into the secrets of mysticism and transport they represent high truths of subtle reality; to those who are still blind they are nothing short of rubbish and impossible hyperbole and myth.

b. Eternal flame

Now, it is a custom among the Hindus and some other people too, that they burn a candle when someone is dying, and they believe that its flame shows light to the soul of the deceased on the journey to the next world. This practice is not unfounded. When a person dies, the soul goes to the astral plane where the *jyoti* (ज्योति), an eternal flame, keeps burning day and night. But we are ignorant of that transcendent flame, about which a mystic says:

ਦੀਪਕ ਦੇਖਾ ਗੈਬ ਕਾ ਬਿਨ ਬਾਤੀ ਬਿਨ ਤੇਲ ॥

Without wick and without oil
Doth the transcendent lamp burn.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.112:64

So we erroneously conclude that this candle of ours in the physical world must be showing light to the soul on the astral plane.

Similarly we burn a candle or lamp in our temples, but we know not that the transcendent lamp is burning within us in the astral temple of God and remains alight all the time.

उलटा कूवा गगन में तिस में जरै चिराग ॥
 तिस में जरै चिराग बिना रोगन बिन बाती ।
 छः रितु बारह मास रहत जरतै दिन राती ॥
 सतगुरु मिला जो होय ताहि की नज़र में आवै ।
 बिन सतगुरु कोउ होय, नहीं वा को दरसावै ॥

An inverted well is in the sky
 And in it burneth a lamp.
 In it the lamp burneth without oil and without wick,
 And keepeth burning day and night
 In all the six seasons and twelve months of the year.
 Who hath found Satguru beholdeth the light;
 But for those who are without Satguru
 It remaineth invisible.

PALTU, PALTU SAHIB KI BANI, VOL.1, KUNDLI 169

Instead of flying up into transcendent realms and finding that spiritual light with the help of a mystic adept, we merely burn a candle in the temple. But as all saints and prophets say, this human body is the real and true temple of God, for in this form lives God himself. Human beings are the microcosm of the whole creation, which is the macrocosm. In external temples we do not have God, but only material idols of our own making; mystics go inside themselves, into the temple of the living God, and behold his divine light. We are blind; we betray our utter ignorance by burning candles in our temples; the true candle of God is continuously burning in the astral plane.

c. Ringing of bells in temples and churches

Moreover, in Hindu temples and Christian churches, bells are rung and other musical instruments played at the time of prayer and worship. Now this is only an attempted and crude copy of what is going on in the astral world. There, in the true temple of God, this music is resounding day and night, for all time and all ages. But instead of finding that true heavenly music, we content ourselves with the bells and conches of this world, which ring for a time and then stop and are of little use for our spiritual uplift and awakening of the soul.

Being ignorant of reality, we play with toys and remain content with sham copies and imitations. On the contrary we should try to seek out a mystic adept, and with his help listen to the true ringing of bells and conches within ourselves in the durbar of God. By hearing that music we attain transcendent knowledge and superconscious bliss, and our passions are curbed, but external bells and conches fail to bring about any of this.

d. Veiled flame

Further, on the occasion of a wedding among Hindus, the bridegroom is shown a flame through a sieve, which he pierces with his sword before entering the house of the bride. Now this also represents a transcendent truth, a thing which is seen inside on the astral plane. Below the seat of the transcendent flame, *jyoti* (ज्योति), there is a place which is called Jhahhri Deep (झंझरी). From this place the light of the *jyoti* appears as a flame looks through a sieve. We have to cross and pierce this stage in order to reach the *jyoti* .

This mistake, of applying truths of astral and other higher planes to physical phenomena, is not confined to any one community or creed, but due to ignorance all religions fall into such an error.

e. The ascent of the Prophet

Muslims believe that their Prophet had an ascent into the skies,

mi'raj (مِراج), but they do not know exactly how it happened. They believe that the Prophet Muhammad rode up to this physical sky on a *buraq* (بُرَاق), which they believe is either a horse or an animal very much like it, full of light, and that he reached the moon in the sky and cleft it into two, which they technically call splitting the moon, *shaqq al-qamar* (شَقَّ الْقَمَر).

Mi'raj means ascent, and as we are ignorant of any spiritual ascent with the subtle astral body into the subtle heavens of the astral plane, and utterly in the dark about any subtle astral moon there, we apply the description of this spiritual ascent of the Prophet to the physical universe.

In the first place, how can a man fly up to the moon riding on a horse, and secondly, what is the point in doing so; it gives us no spiritual good. And if the Prophet actually cut the moon in two, how is it that we see it whole still? No, this description cannot apply to this material world. It refers to the subtle ascent of the soul into the astral plane. It is further stated that the chain of the door of his room began swinging when he left, and it was still moving when he returned; that is, it did not take him much time to go to the moon and come back. Now we cannot imagine that a horse, howsoever fast its speed may be, can go up to the moon and come back in a trice. It is physically impossible.

The real significance of this statement is that the Prophet went up into the astral plane. He went on *buraq*, the plural of *barq* (بَرْق), which means lightning. Now this lightning refers to the internal spiritual transcendent light. As the Prophet concentrated his attention on this spiritual current of light that issues forth downwards and outwards from the central focus of the astral plane, and as by this means he secured access into that subtle plane, we can say that he rode on lightning. And as we have to cross a moon in the astral plane, he is said to have pierced the moon.

It is our ignorance of the true significance of such mystic allegories that leads us to disbelieve them or dismiss them as absurdities.

f. Christ's spiritual ascent

Similarly Christians believe that Jesus Christ flew up to heaven with his physical body. But what is the need of a gross covering in the purely spiritual regions? And how can a physical thing be taken into the astral, transcendent world? In fact, some of us seem to think that heaven is up above the skies, and hell far below the ocean. This is our mistake. Heaven and hell are not physical. They are places in the astral world; they are subtle and transcendent. Jesus Christ certainly ascended into heaven, but not to this visible, physical sky. There is no spiritual significance in it. Christ went up into the subtle sky of the astral plane. He did not go with his physical body, but with his subtle astral body.

g. Three covers

There are three kinds of covers over us: causal, astral and physical. With the physical body we move in the physical world, but we put off this gross covering when we enter the astral plane. There we move with the astral body, which also has to be cast off before we can enter the causal region. To access the spiritual realm of transcendence, we have to get rid of the causal body as well. Mystical ascent means leaving the physical body and going up into the astral plane with the subtle astral body, and farther up into the causal region by putting off the astral body too, and finally going up into the highest regions of ever purer spirituality by casting off even the causal body. This is true spiritual ascent, and whosoever went up did so in this way. A person's rising high above the ground is not a spiritual flight; there is little spiritual significance in levitation.

h. Levitation in medieval Christianity

In the history of the Christian religion, we come across a very interesting account. There is a general belief that spiritually advanced people become lighter and levitate – float up in the air

or fly into the sky. At one time this was taken too literally by the Christians, and those who wanted to pass for spiritually advanced people made contrivances by which they could either remain in the air in the middle of the room or better still, keep hanging by the ceiling without any visible or detectable support.

One man succeeded rather well in deceiving people and enjoyed a wide popularity and fame for a long time. His mechanism for remaining close to the ceiling was so perfect that nobody could detect it. But truth must come out, they say. Falsehood succeeds for a time, but ultimately truth comes out. Once, when a large number of people were gathered to pay him homage and he was just hanging by the ceiling, it so happened that the contrivance failed; something in it went wrong, the man fell down on the heads of the people below, and his whole trickery was found out. The people hooted at him for his hypocrisy and treated him very badly. In a moment, the saint was revealed as a fake.

Now this is the consequence of taking mystic statements too literally. It is of course true that spiritually advanced people fly up into the heavens, but it is not the physical body that rises above the ground. The lightness and consequent flight refers to the soul. If we are pure of heart and our soul is transparent like a window, then certainly we become light and able to fly up with the subtle astral body into the astral plane. It is all a spiritual ascent, but we do not understand it, because our tenth door is closed, our third eye is not open. We are blind, we do not see; we are ignorant, we do not know. We should first open the third eye with the help of a mystic adept and enter that tenth door; then we shall understand all mystic allegories.

i. Guru Nanak's going to the moon

Not only is it said of the Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ that they flew up into the heavens, but similar stories are told of Guru Nanak as well. It is said that he went up to the moon.

Now this going to the moon is altogether an internal spiritual ascent into the astral plane and beyond with the subtle soul. It has nothing to do with the physical universe, but by thinking that Guru Nanak ascended to the moon of this world, we commit the blunder of applying truths of subtle planes to this material world of ours and fall into serious error.

j. Gold in the womb

Similarly, the Vedas mention Om or Brahma as Hiranya Garbha (हिरण्यगर्भ), but we fail to grasp its significance. We try to understand it at the level of intellect, but this refers to a transcendent state of superconscious ecstasy, which is beyond the physical and even the astral plane, and above all thinking and reasoning. *Hiranya garbha* means one who has gold inside, in the womb, and this is said of Brahm, the Creator. How does the Creator have gold in the womb? The significance of this, only mystics know. It is a spiritual, transcendent secret. We make a sad mistake in applying such descriptions to physical things.

The reference here is to the transcendent light of the spiritual stage of Brahm, which shines like the colour of gold and which is the 'womb' of God. It is a womb because all the lower creation of astral and physical planes originates and emanates from this place, just as a child is made in the womb. The germ or seed of all creation is there, and thus it is truly the womb of God. The phrase *hiranya garbha* has also been translated as the Golden Egg, but it does not convey much unless we grasp the right spiritual significance.

4 Concluding

We can understand such mystic allegories only by experiencing transport. If we understand a mystic statement too literally, we leave out the real meaning of the passage. If that passage be compared to

a picture, then we can say that we merely see the marks of different colours but do not recognize them as making up a complete picture. What we see is no doubt there, but what truly is there, what the artist has put in there, we do not see. We see only separate lines and patches of colour; we do not see the picture that is in those colours. We understand the literal meaning of words, but fail to comprehend the significance of their combination. We cannot understand mystic literature without getting mystic training. Spiritual light shines, but we cannot see it; we are blind.

The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

BIBLE, *JOHN 1:5*

CHAPTER THREE

Transcendence of Mysticism

ONLY THE EYE of transport beholds the divine light; only in an eternal moment of absolute consciousness does the soul bathe in its radiant glory; only in a communion of ecstatic rapture does it embrace that beauteous lustre. But the world at large knows it not.

I The absolute of mystics

We are all engulfed in the whirlpool of karmas and chained to good and evil, but the God of great mystics is beyond all duality and relativity, and above all contradiction and opposition, all-comprehending yet all-transcending, first and final, the Supreme Being, one now and forever, indivisible and eternal, ultimate and absolute.

For mystics, God alone is real; all else is unreal. It is he who manifests himself in so many forms, but this manyness is delusion. Reality is one, single, unanalyzable, indivisible; it is a supreme, spiritual, conscious Being.

Idealism is the theory of mysticism. Idealism is an attempt to put into words what mystics see in their transport, but strictly speaking, that spiritual experience is absolutely transcendent; it cannot be put into words. The theory of ontological idealism is

the nearest approach that language can make to an expression of spiritual truth.

नान्तःप्रज्ञं न बहिष्प्रज्ञं नोभयतःप्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम् ।
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं
प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते स आत्मा स विज्ञेयः । 7 ॥

Not inward consciousness, nor outward,
Nor consciousness of both together,
Nor the consciousness of deep sleep;
Nor knower nor non-knower; invisible, relationless,
Incomprehensible, indescribable, beyond thought,
Unable to be pointed to, the self-known, himself;
He negateth all phenomena of the universe;
In himself is he tranquil and blissful.
One without a second.

MANDUKYA UPANISHAD 1:7

Absolute reality is perfect in every way. It transcends all descriptions and all qualities. It is neither good nor bad, neither pure nor impure, neither limited nor unlimited, neither finite nor infinite, neither absolute nor non-absolute; it is nothing – nothing that we can name or think. It transcends all comparison and relativity; it goes beyond the difference of unity and manyness.

That reality is absolute and transcendent, in itself and by itself, all itself without a second. There is no other there; there is room for none else. The object of the spiritual knowledge of that stage is not another. It is one – here, there, and everywhere – but only one. It is beyond all description. It is 'not this, not this'. Nay, it is even beyond that. It is beyond the pairs of opposites and beyond all relativity; it is beyond the chain of cause and effect, beyond all causation and karmas, beyond all knowing, feeling and willing, beyond all actions and all deeds, beyond desires, beyond

instincts, beyond everything and all things. And yet it is in everything, and with everything; it is everything itself. Nothing exists except that "It".

ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੋ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਦੂਸਰ ਹੋਆ ਨ ਹੋਗੁ ॥

One alone pervadeth, O Nanak;
No second was there, nor ever shall be.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.250

خودکوز و خودکوز و خودکوز و خودکوز

Himself is the pot,
And himself the potmaker,
And himself even the clay of the pot.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਸਭੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਹੈ ਸਭੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਹੈ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਈ ॥

All is God, all is God: without God is nothing.

NAMDEV, ADI GRANTH, P.485

This ultimate stage is beyond all phenomena, maya and delusion, and above all ignorance and darkness. Neither pleasure is there nor pain, neither gain nor loss, neither reward nor punishment, neither success nor failure, neither goodness nor badness, neither activity nor non-activity, neither perfection nor imperfection, neither transcendence nor non-transcendence. Nothing is there that one can think of, nothing that may be explained or even pointed out.

And still that spiritual reality is there, penetrating all creation and immanent in every thing and being. In the superconscious ecstasy of the highest transport there is neither person nor character,

neither life nor death, neither existence nor non-existence – nothing, nothing at all of this world. It is pure and perfect spirituality, transcendent through and through. It is absolute in every way, all in itself, through itself, by itself and for itself. It is all in all, the ultimate, absolute reality. All else is its manifestation or appearance.

2 Transcendent bliss

From the description given above, it might seem that this highest stage is a place of indifference or neutrality, but it is not so. That highest spiritual plane is a realm of supreme bliss and beatitude, but this bliss must be something different from, yet infinitely better than, the happiness we experience on the sensual or intellectual level. Moreover, this bliss is eternal and absolute; it does not depend on anything else; it is in itself, independent and transcendent.

It is no worldly feeling or experience, but an infinitely higher and deeper reality, which becomes identical with our soul in a state of superconscious rapture. This bliss knows no opposite; it is not bliss in contrast with something which is non-bliss. No, it is an absolute and positive state of the soul in its pure transcendence and spirituality.

True happiness lies in mystic transport and realization. The Roman emperor Mark Antony sought happiness in love, Brutus in glory, Caesar in dominion. The first found disgrace, the second disgust, the last ingratitude, and each destruction. The things of the world, being weighed in the balance, are all found wanting. Self-realization alone will bring true peace and happiness. And what is that ultimate spiritual state of self-realization?

बेगम पुरा सहर को नाउ ॥ दूखु अंदोहु नही तिहि ठाउ ॥
 नां तसवीस खिराजु न मालु ॥ खउफु न खता न तरसु जवाल ॥
 अब मोहि खूब वतन गह पाई ॥ ऊहां खैरि सदा मेरे भाई ॥
 काइमु दाइमु सदा पातिसाही ॥ दोम न सेम एक सो आही ॥

'Woeless' is that city called;
 No trouble existeth there nor worry;
 No apprehension, no goods, no taxes;
 No fear of blundering, nor danger of falling.
 Now have I found a wondrous home;
 Safety is ever there, O friend.
 Everlasting is that kingship;
 No second nor third,
 But ever one.

RAVIDAS, ADI GRANTH, P.345

Oneness reigns supreme there, and transcendently blissful is that realm.

ਸੁਖ ਮਹਲ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਊਚ ਦੁਆਰੇ ॥
 ਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਵਾਸਹਿ ਭਗਤ ਪਿਆਰੇ ॥

Blissful are those mansions and lofty those gates
 Where reside beloved devotees.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.739

ਸਹਜ ਕਥਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਅਤਿ ਮੀਠੀ ॥
 ਵਿਰਲੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਨੇਤ੍ਰਹੁ ਡੀਠੀ ॥

The transcendent Word of the Lord
 Is wondrously sweet,
 But rare is the one
 Who with his own eyes beholdeth it.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.739

That supreme bliss transcends both pleasure and pain.

کال در اندر چو در آئی واری از غم و شادی قدم پیروں نہی

For when thou enterest that (secret) door,
Beyond both pleasure and pain dost thou go.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥

Realizing by attainment through spiritual yoga,
The secret, ancient, and inaccessible Deity,
Who in the recess of life is lodged,
In the heart of things, in the cavern of being,
The wise person banisheth
Joy and sorrow from himself.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:2:12

That superconscious ecstasy leaves no room for duality and relativity. The one absolute truth permeates every pore of our being; the one transcendent light sheds its radiance on all our existence. The condition of that transcendent stage is indescribable. It is in fact wrong to talk of the condition of that stage, or even to call it a stage.

It is for lack of a more adequate expression that mystics describe that final stage of spiritual ascent as an ocean of absolute bliss and beatitude. In that absolute stage, knowledge, love and bliss meet in their rarest transcendence and become one. It is this supreme oneness that is the ultimate reality, and in that highest state of superconscious ecstasy and divine rapture there is nothing else but this oneness.

It is always one – here, there, and everywhere, in itself and by itself, absolute and transcendent, all-absorbing and all-pervading, all-comprehending and all-penetrating, all-sustaining and all-annihilating, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and yet single,

unanalyzable, a unity. It is one in many, and many in one, but always the same one – comprehending and transcending all.

ਤਹ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਸੋਗੁ ਨ ਹਰਖਾ ॥

Neither death is there nor birth,
Nor pleasure nor pain.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.739

In that supremely transcendent stage, bliss, knowledge, truth, love, existence, reality, spirituality, being – all these mean the same thing, for there is only One. It is Oneness through and through, call it what we may. It is everything and all things in One; and this One is indivisible and unanalyzable. It is bliss, it is knowledge, it is reality, but it is never more than one. That One is ultimate, absolute, transcendent, eternal, without any divisions or partitions, without any flaw or frailty. It is One, which appears as many to our deluded eyes; but in itself, it is always and forever the Indivisible One

3 Beyond good and evil: morality is essential to transport

We cannot find access into subtle planes unless we are morally good. Mystic practice helps us in our moral advancement, and the more moral we are, the better we can perform the mystic practices. But after beginning with morality, mysticism in its advanced stages leaves all morality behind. We go from evil to the stage of mixed good and evil, and thence to the stage of pure good, but when we go still higher, we transcend all distinctions of good and evil. We go beyond the sphere of relativity and duality, morality and manyness.

ਬਰਾ ਭਲਾ ਕਹੁ ਕਿਸ ਨੋ ਕਹੀਐ ਸਗਲੈ ਜੀਅ ਤੁਮ੍ਹਾਰੇ ॥

Say, whom shall we call good or bad,
When all creatures are thine?

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.383

When all things and beings are really one, whom can we call good or evil? This is the transcendent stage, which is beyond all duality and relativity. Oneness reigns supreme there. No room is left for a second; the Absolute One is the sole reality. It is beyond all descriptions and comparisons; no words can ever express it; no thought can ever reach it.

Thus the ultimate, absolute, naked reality cannot be called good or bad. It is altogether beyond the sphere of morality; it is all-penetrating, all-pervading, all-comprehending, yet all-transcending. It envelopes in its circle all that is and all that may be. If we call it good, then evil would be something outside it, but there is nothing outside. Everything is within it.

نہ عصیاں ماندونے طاعت شدم نحو اندرون ساعت
چناں گشتم در آں حالت کہ وے من گشت من ہم وے

Neither vice is there, nor virtue;
In that moment of absolute consciousness am I lost;
And into that transcendent state have I gone,
Where he hath become myself and I him.

MUINUDDIN CHISHTI, *DIVAN-I GHARIB NAWAZ*, P.228

وہم گشت من ہم وے چناں گشتم در آں حالت کہ وے من گشت من ہم وے

With the same eye
Doth he look on good and evil,

For the absolute goodness of his own self
Hath he realized.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਖਾਲਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਲਕ ਵਸੈ ਰਬ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਮੰਦਾ ਕਿਸ ਨੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਾਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੋਈ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

In the creation is the Creator, O Sheikh Farid,
And the creation liveth in God.
Whom can we call evil,
When without him is none.

FARID, ADI GRANTH, P.1381

For in him we live, and move, and have our being.

BIBLE, ACTS 17:28

4 Non-attachment philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita

Mystics of subtle transcendent stages lay stress on action without desire. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna also enunciates the principle of doing actions without attachment to their fruit. Now, how can a person act without having desire? Generally, it is our desire for the fruit of our action that goads us on to activity. Psychologically speaking, it is the interest we take in things that enables us to attend to them. Interest implies desire of some form. If we have no interest or desire, then there is nothing to prompt us to action. So the question arises: Can we act without desire at all? Psychology says no; mysticism says yes.

a. Action without desire

It is in two ways that we can act without cherishing any desire. Firstly, we may not be attached to the action we are performing,

but to something else which involves that action. Here our action is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. We are still attached to action, but only indirectly. Now if the other thing we are attached to is nothing worldly, if it is God himself, then we can, in a way, say that we are not attached to actions, meaning thereby that we perform them because they are a means for realizing God. But strictly speaking, it is not absolutely a case of action without desire. This is, however, the first step, and might lead to a true desireless action.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Thy business is with the action only,
Never with its fruit;
So let not the fruit of action be thy motive,
Nor be thou to inaction attached.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:47

This means that we can perform all actions considering them as our duty, so to speak, desiring neither success nor failure. Thus we shall not be attached to the fruit of action. If we do all actions merely because we know we have to do them, then we shall have no desire accompanying them. We do those actions simply because God wants us to do them.

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः ।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित्करोति सः ॥

Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of action,
Always content, nowhere seeking refuge,
He is not doing anything, although doing actions.

BHAGAVAD GITA IV:20

This is what is called *nishkarmi* – becoming a non-doer. But some desire may still be left lurking – a desire to please God or to act according to the dictates of duty. We may give up worldly desire as a means to find God. In that case, the desire to find God will still be in us.

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥

Smaller than an atom, huger than huge,
The spirit abideth hidden
In the secret heart of this creature.
When a person is stripped of wishes
And weaned from sorrow,
Then he beholdeth the spirit;
Purified from temperament,
He seeth God in his glory.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:2:20

When, however, the soul of a person becomes one with God, all desire must end, because God is perfect and has no desires. In their transport, mystics of the highest order enter the transcendent being of God and become one with him. They are altogether above desire and all other frailties of the flesh. They are *in* this world, but not *of* it. They have the appearance of being human, but they are not; they are superhuman. Nay, they are beyond that even. They are God himself; they are one with the ultimate, absolute, transcendent reality. In a superconscious state of ecstatic rapture, they lose their individuality in the all-enveloping and all-transcending reality of absolute oneness. And where there is only one, there is no scope for desire.

What appears to us as many is a delusion; multiplicity and variety are ignorance and darkness. One is the reality. That reality mystics come to know in their superconscious ecstasy of transport;

they enter it, embrace it and become identical with it. They see, realize, know and become the absolute reality, which is one.

All action, all desire, all phenomena, even our own existence as human beings and the existence of this world as the world – all is delusion. The existence of anything as a thing separate and distinct from that one reality is delusion. We are in this delusion, and because for us this world and all its things are real, so are we real; our actions are real and so are our desires. But when once, through mystic transport, we realize the delusional character of all these things and go out of this ignorance, we are beyond all actions and desires now and forever.

All our activities are in delusion. We are wise and foolish in delusion, we are pious and wicked, learned and ignorant, strong and weak, well and ill, hungry and full, desirous and desireless – all in delusion.

नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः ।
अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः ॥

The Lord accepteth neither the evil-doing
Nor yet the well-doing of any.
Wisdom is enveloped by unwisdom;
Therewith mortals are deluded.

BHAGAVAD GITA V:15

We are deluded; mystics are not. They have gone beyond this darkness; they live in the light of ultimate absolute reality.

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥

Broken is the knot of the heart,
And pierced are all doubts,

Destroyed are all his actions (karmas),
When he beholdeth the omnipresent.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD 11:2:8

And when they transcend the bounds of all ignorance, how can they be subject to any particular item or bit of it? When they are altogether beyond delusion, how can they have desire, which is a part and phenomenon of delusion? They are above all desires and beyond all human emotions and feelings.

In fact, they do not act, for action, too, is in delusion. It is God who acts through them. They have no being separate from God, and their physical appearance as a human being is also a delusion. Their real essence is transcendent and absolute. We must get out of the universal delusion of this physical creation if we want to be non-doers, if we are anxious to go beyond maya, beyond the range of desires and karmas; and the exit leading out of this delusion of phenomena is the portal of mystic transport, which can be opened only by a true mystic adept.

b. Real renunciation

Thus does the true mystic give up all desire. He renounces everything, he turns out all else from his mind except the one ultimate truth. This is true renunciation – to drive out of self everything that is not the true self, the absolute reality, and then to live in the life and light of that spiritual transcendence.

طریق کام حستین چیست ترک کام خود گفتن کلاه سروری این است اگر ایس ترک بردوزی

What is the fulfilment of desire?

Renouncing all desire,

The royal crown is this:

That everything dost thou renounce.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

A person who has no desire has no want, and he who has no want is the king of kings. True happiness lies in contentment and spiritual realization. One who casts off all desire gets rid of all worry and anxiety.

در دل بے آرزو را غم و تشویش نیست در جهان بے نیازی هیچ کس درویش نیست

In the desireless mind
Entereth not worry or woe;
In the world of desirelessness
None is beggar.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

One who wants nothing has all. In the eyes of mystics, rich and important people – even kings and emperors – are beggars, for they are still in want. They have much, but they want more. When Alexander the Great went to see the mystic Diogenes, Alexander told Diogenes to ask for a boon, but Diogenes said to him, “You are yourself a beggar, for you desire still more; what would you give me? I am perfectly happy, I want nothing.” When Alexander pressed him and said, “Please do ask for something,” then, as it was cold winter, Diogenes said, “All right, please stand aside and let me have a little more of the sun.” Mystics look upon even the god Indra as a beggar, for having so much he still desires more.

When the great mystic Sarmad was brought before the Emperor Aurangzeb, he was bare-headed.* Questioned about how he dared come in the presence of the emperor without properly covering his head, he replied:

سر برہنہ نیستم دارم کلاه چار ترک ترک دنیا ترک عقی ترک مولا ترک ترک

* In India going bare-headed before an important person shows lack of respect.

Bare-headed I am not,
 For I wear the cap of four renunciations:
 Renunciation of this world,
 Renunciation of the next world,
 Renunciation of God
 And renunciation of renunciation.

SARMAD, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Mystics renounce everything, for all in this world is delusion and darkness; even our idea of God is ignorance. In mysticism, we begin by giving up our desires of this world and those for the next, but in later stages we renounce all ideas and everything. We renounce manyness and embrace absolute oneness. We renounce even God as an entity separate and different from our existence, for we are one with the Father, as Christ also said. We renounce even renunciation itself, for we transcend the distinction between renunciation and non-renunciation. We become absolutely transcendent.

c. Beyond intellectual grasp

The philosophy of non-attachment is very deep; it is for those only who wish to know the ultimate reality and desire spiritual flight into subtle regions of transcendent spirituality.

And it is in mysticism only that such a philosophy finds its full appreciation and complete explanation; it is mystics alone who understand and grasp its profound and subtle significance. At the intellectual level we are in delusion, and this philosophy of transcendent reality is not for us.

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਸੋ ਨਾ ਆਖੀਏ ਜੋ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਗੁਨ ਕਥੈ ਬਨਾਇ ॥
 ਪੰਡਿਤ ਸੋਈ ਜਾਨੀਏ ਜੋ ਪੜਿਆ ਬਿਸਰ ਸਭ ਜਾਇ ॥

The pundit (man of knowledge) is not he
 Who studieth, thinketh, and delivereth discourses;
 The pundit is he who forgetteth all that he hath read.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

We have to forget all, so to speak, to remember Him. We have to drive away the pride of intellectual learning from our mind, to make room for spiritual insight and transcendent knowledge.

علموں بس کریں ادویار اکو الف تیرے درکار

Enough of thy learning, O friend;
 Only one Alpha dost thou need.

BULLEH SHAH, *QANOON-I ISHQ*, P.20

The one single reality – the Absolute One – is enough for us, because all variety is delusion. Absolute truth abides in unity; variety shows false appearances. Unity reveals true knowledge; variety betrays blind grouping and guessing. Unity is perfect, absolute, comprehensive and transcendent; variety is imperfect, relative, narrow and superficial. Unity is whole and one; variety is fragmentary and many.

Since the mystic path is very subtle, its philosophy is also subtle. We shall understand and realize all this subtlety if a true mystic sheds his lustre upon us. It is only by his unbounded grace that we can be initiated into transcendent secrets of transport and ecstasy; it is only through his infinite mercy that we can know the ultimate truth and realize the absolute reality. In fact, even for an intellectual understanding of the theory and philosophy of mysticism, we need a living mystic adept.

5 Contradictions in mystic writings explained

To a superficial observer, mysticism is full of contradictions, because mystic knowledge is beyond the sphere of intellect. Apparently, all books of mysticism present a number of glaring contradictions, and an ordinary reader finds it hard to reconcile them. But if we dive deep into the profound significance and import of the words used, we find that the contradictions are only skin-deep; they are contradictions of words and not of meaning. Reality, in fact, cannot be expressed in any but contradictory terms, and even then it is not adequately expressed. Any attempt to put the transcendent truths of spiritual transport into ordinary language leads us into verbal contradictions. Or, we can say, reality has many sides and phases; it is so comprehensive that no one theory can express it. All opposed and contradictory views must be welded together to include all sides and aspects of total reality.

And how do mystics solve this contradiction? They do not enter into long and fruitless intellectual discussions; they go inside and up, into astral, causal, and still subtler spiritual planes, and see reality from all points of view. Reality appears as many in the world of physical things. This is the delusive appearance of reality; it is phenomena or maya, which we call experience. But if we go a little higher into the subtle astral plane, our angle of vision is changed and our delusion is partially removed. At the physical level, we were blind; we did not see reality, but only perceived phenomena. But on the astral plane we begin to see reality, although our vision is still defective and jaundiced. But we do see, and this seeing yields a different result from that which our intellectual groping gave us on the physical plane. From a distance, a bush looks like a person sitting on the ground, but approaching it, we find no person, but only the bush. Similarly, when one goes higher up, one has a truer view of reality. This is a very crude simile to illustrate the point.

a. Hidden reality

God is in the world, but we do not see him; he is too subtle for these physical eyes. But if we ourselves become subtle, we can come into contact with him. God is in the world, as ghee (clarified butter) is in milk, and fire in wood. We do not see butter in milk, nor does milk serve the purpose for which butter is used, but if we churn milk we can take out the butter. Similarly, fire is not visible in wood, nor does wood burn us if we touch it, but if we rub one piece against another, fire will come out and first consume those pieces of wood themselves, and then such things as are nearby.

Similarly, God is in the world, but unless we make him manifest by mystic practice he remains hidden. Just as in the world matter is not lost or destroyed, it only changes form, similarly God or reality is always there, it only appears different on different spiritual planes. God is always one; he appears as many, just as the same thing appears in three different forms of vapour, water and ice. The thing or essence of reality is the same; only the form or appearance is different.

God is the reality and essence of all things and beings. He is the same all over, but to our jaundiced vision he appears as an infinite number of different and distinct things. This is delusion or ignorance of true reality. At higher spiritual stages, reality is visible in a purer and more naked form. Things of one plane are true and real for that plane, but in the higher light of a subtler plane they become deceptive and unreal.

b. Grades of reality

Thus we can say that reality has grades. At the last and final transcendent stage, reality is in its absolute truth and purity. There, it is one, whole, indivisible, all-comprehending and all-transcending. In the regions just below this absolute stage, reality appears in a different and slightly unreal or covered form. Still it

is one, but not so pure as on the highest plane. Coming down still lower, we find the one reality appearing in still different forms, which are unreal and delusive proportionately to their distance, so to speak, from the highest peak of pure spiritual transcendence. At last we reach the physical world, where reality is all hidden and we see only appearance or phenomena, which look to us as so many different things.

The phenomena of each plane are true for that plane; they are of the same order of truth as the existence of that plane. But in the truer and more penetrating light of the next higher plane this truth loses its validity and force, and so on with still higher subtler planes. Now if we compare the knowledge of this physical world, acquired through intellect, with the transcendent insight of mystic transport, we find that in this material world our existence is real, but from the point of view of transcendent reality this world itself ceases to be real as a physical world, nor do we have any existence as human beings.

Now which is the truth? Are we real or unreal? Does this world exist or not? Well, the absolute truth is that neither the world exists nor do human beings. But this final truth cannot come into the mind so long as one is on the human level, because in absolute reality, neither the person nor the mind exist as such. (Of course, soul is different from mind.) How can true knowledge come into a delusive unreal mind? Our mind and we have no existence, in the same sense in which this world has no existence.

Hence, for us as human beings this world exists; for the deluded mind, the world of delusion is a reality. This world is of the same order of reality as we ourselves; if we are, this world also is. But as we are not real, so is this world unreal. This last is the ultimate, absolute, transcendent truth. But if we are unreal, then all our doings, our desires, our thoughts, are also unreal, and then the question of contradiction does not arise, for it pertains to thought, and thought

is unreal. For the mystics of the absolute stage, reality is the transcendent One; for us, it is this world of manyness. They embrace absolute reality; we grope in relative reality or appearance.

c. Free will

This also settles the question of human free will and the foreknowledge of God. Both can be true at the same time, for they are truths of different grades of reality. If the very existence of human beings is a delusion, then anything about them – their intellect, their free will, etc. – cannot be real. If a thing is unreal, its qualities or attributes are also unreal. Thus in absolute truth, human beings have no existence as humans, and consequently their free will is also non-existent (or rather the question of free will does not arise); but for people in this world of delusion and appearance, where we have an existence, our free will also exists.

Our existence as human beings and our free will are realities of the same order. They are real relative to each other but unreal in absolute truth. For human beings, free will is real and the world is real, but if we realize the unreality of our very being as humans, the reality of our free will and of this world also vanishes. The absolute reality is truly one, but it is not for human beings to say so, for they can never know it so long as they are human. It is only the superhuman insight of mystic transport that reveals reality as the transcendent, absolute One.

d. Relative truth and absolute truth

The contradictions in mystics' writings are thus due to the fact that they are truths of different planes. What is true at one stage may not be true at another. All is relative truth below the very highest realm, where we have absolute truth, but as our very existence as human beings is relative, here on the physical plane we have to deal with relative truth. Absolute truth would be out of place in this world.

If we want absolute truth, we can have it by mystic transport, but when we reach the superconscious state of absolute truth, which is the transcendent oneness of reality, we shall cease to be human. Absolute truth has no meaning for us as human beings. We live in the world of phenomena and appearance, and what we experience is manyness. In this world of manyness, we have to go by the relative truth of this plane. From the point of view of absolute knowledge, this whole world is unreal; then there can be no question of truth or falsehood.

6 Recapitulation

Thus we see that mystics of the highest order transcend the bounds of morality; they go beyond good and evil and attain the spiritual state of absolute bliss and beatitude. That superconscious stage of mystic transport knows no sorrow nor sadness, nor worry nor anxiety; it is beyond all desires and wants, and above all ideas and notions.

If we reach that highest stage of transcendent union of the individual with the universal, then we go altogether beyond the domain of desire. This is the non-attachment philosophy of the mystics, who cut off all attachment with things of this world and liberate their soul from the burden of worldly desire and the bondage of karmas. They act, but they have no desire. Success or failure, riches or poverty, fame or disrepute – all is one for them, but they need not make a parade of their greatness and transcendence; they lead a life of humility. And to attain that transcendent stage beyond good and evil, beyond desires and wants, intellectual learning is not needed. In fact, pride of intellectual knowledge is a hindrance to spiritual insight. What we require is a sincere and keen desire in us, and a true mystic adept to guide us.

The apparent contradictions in mystic writings are utterances of different planes or grades of reality. The truth of every plane,

except the very highest and last, is relative. It may become untrue in the light of the truth of a higher stage, but this higher truth, although it supersedes the lower one, does not falsify it as such. The truth of the lower plane will ever remain true for that plane, but it is not the final truth. As the soul rises during mystic transport into realms of higher and higher transcendence, it gets wider, truer, more comprehensive and more exact views of reality; and at the final stage, the reality is seen as the Absolute One. There the soul becomes identical with this ultimate unity.

At that stage, absolute oneness reigns supreme, but then there is no person, no world, no mind, no thinking, no question of relative and absolute, no question of truth and falsehood, no words, no talk, no phenomena, no action, nothing except the absolute, transcendent One. When we are in the physical world, relative truth is the truth for us, but the final truth is still the absolute truth of transcendent oneness.

When we attain that stage of absolute truth, then there will be no second to be talked to, no action, no deed, no word and no thought; there will be nothing at all except that universal, eternal Oneness. Such a stage is beyond human conception and imagination. To understand mysticism, we need mystic training under an adept. We need the mystic teacher, not only for experiencing transport, but even for getting an intellectual grasp of mystic philosophy, if we may call it so. The essential factor in mysticism is the mystic adept.

CHAPTER FOUR

Offshoots of Mysticism

THERE ARE CERTAIN PRACTICES which do not come within mysticism proper, but are allied to it. They are, so to speak, on the borderline. Under this category we have mesmerism, hypnotism, clairvoyance, thought reading, personal magnetism, spiritualism and so many kinds of occultism, which may be called the offshoots of mysticism, and are sometimes an abuse of it. A word needs be said about them before we pass on to true mystic methods.

I Concentration

In all these practices, as also in mysticism, the first step is concentration: the collection of one's scattered mind or the focusing of one's attention on a point. Concentration of attention increases one's power of control over things and it is quite natural, too, for scattered energy cannot achieve what the collected can do.

The spirit current that, from the focus of the third eye, flows outward in a thousand channels and gives strength to every limb and organ of the body, is scattered. It is divided into parts, so to speak, each part doing its own job, so that the same current does a variety of work. It sees through the eyes, hears with the ears, smells with the nose, and eats by means of the mouth. By means of the

tongue and the lips it speaks, with the feet it walks, and with the hands performs multifarious actions. Apart from these physical functions, there are countless mental processes that are ever going on within us.

Thus our soul spends its energy in a hundred and one ways. Now if we give our whole attention to hearing, we can catch even very low sound; that is, attention increases our power of hearing; and so on with all other functions and activities of ours. To appreciate delicate shades of colour in a picture, or to see a minute thing, we have to strain our eyes, and when we want to lift up a heavy weight, we strive to put all our energy into our hands and muscles. Concentrated attention ever means increased power.

Further, if by means of mystic practice, we want to transport our soul from the physical world into the astral plane, we must collect it first. If our soul is scattered, what is there to be lifted? In this world, when we go on a journey, we pack up our luggage before carrying it with us; similarly, when we desire flight into transcendent spiritual realms, we have to concentrate or collect our spirit energy before we can move upward. Our soul spread in the body may be likened to an army scattered over a vast area. It must be collected at its headquarters before it can shift as a unit to another place.

2 Mysticism and mesmerism

Now, such practices as mesmerism and hypnotism are akin to mysticism, inasmuch as all these imply concentration of mind and attention. But, while in mysticism the soul current is focused inside oneself and its concentrated energy is used for going up into transcendent realms, in practices such as mesmerism the centre of attention where the mind is collected is some extraneous point, so that the concentrated energy is not used for any spiritual uplift, but in the phenomena of this world. Thus, mystics

muster up their spirit energy and utilize it for their betterment, enlightenment and spiritual awakening; mesmerists also collect their little wealth, but they use it for external purposes.

If we concentrate within ourselves, then the point of application of the spirit current is inside us; the flow of the current of soul energy is inward. Consequently, its collected power can be utilized for flying up into astral and other higher subtler planes within us. But if we concentrate at some spot which is outside us, then the point of application of the spirit current is outside our body; the flow of our soul energy is outwards into phenomena of this world, and consequently, we cannot use this collected energy for any spiritual ascent into the subtle astral plane. Ascent is always inwards; outside it is all physical phenomena.

a. Nature of mesmerism and other practices

Mesmerism and other such practices are either concentration of mind employed to secure knowledge of physical things without the aid of physical organs, or strengthened will power, used to control and subdue the will of others. In these, we generally begin by concentrating our attention on a point on the wall or a similar place, and go on with this practice until we become solely absorbed in our concentration. Gradually, the attention is trained to collect at a point outside us. When, afterwards, we mesmerize or hypnotize a person, we focus our spirit energy on him and try to overpower his mind.

To be able to do so successfully, the recipient, the patient or the medium, should be of a weaker mind or will than ourselves; otherwise, we will not be able to subdue him. If our collected mental energy or will power is not greater than that of the person who is the object of our operation or performance, then our concentrated will cannot overcome his mind. That is why people with weak minds and feeble will power are chosen for a feat of this sort, as they readily yield to hypnotism and mesmerizing

gazes, and consequently, such practices work successfully and satisfactorily with them. We cannot hypnotize or mesmerize a mystic, for his spirit current and attention force are far stronger and greater than ours.

b. Their use

Such practices are generally used for seeing distant or hidden things, discovering thieves and dacoits and getting news of absent friends. Strengthened will power may be used to influence and overawe others, or cure people of their diseases, especially mental ailments. Several doctors use such powers as a supplement to their medicinal treatment, and professionals make money by showing their mesmeric and hypnotic feats to the public. By such practices, things can be brought from a distance without any visible means of conveyance or physical aid, and people are made to stay in mid-air without any material prop or support.

c. Miracles

Sometimes such supernatural feats are performed by mystics with the help of their inner spiritual power. Mystics of a higher order always act for the good of others, but some lower class of mystics might use their inner power to show off such feats. Such people, however, soon lose their spirituality.

Yogis are said to possess *siddhis*, miraculous powers such as levitation, suspension of breath and sustenance without food, which they acquire through yogic disciplines.

3 Mystic view

But in true mystic schools, such things are looked upon as mere jugglers' tricks, not because they are not supernatural, but because they are powers of the lowest spiritual state, rather to be avoided

as temptations than hugged as blessings. Every pursuit and every line has its own pitfalls, and these powers are stumbling blocks in the way of true spiritual uplift and transcendent flight.

Those subtle powers, which are the very zenith of mesmeric glory and the height of hypnotic control, meet the mystic at the very threshold of his spiritual ascent into transcendent realms. They lie at his feet, and in the hope of being favoured with service, even some powers of a higher order keep waiting for him.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਉਲਟੀ ਭਈ ਨਵ ਨਿਧਿ ਖਰਚਿਉ ਖਾਉ ॥
ਅਠਾਰਹ ਸਿਧੀ ਪਿਛੈ ਲਗੀਆ ਫਿਰਨਿ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਸੈ ਨਿਜ ਥਾਇ ॥

By meeting Satguru
Our spirit energy is turned upwards,
And at our disposal lie the nine treasures.
The eighteen supernatural powers (*siddhis*) follow us,
And in our true transcendent home do we find abode.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.91

Although such powers come to a mystic at the very start of his spiritual journey into transcendent regions, he considers it below his dignity to use them. A very rich person would be ashamed of giving a penny to a beggar. He would either give a handful of silver and gold or nothing at all. Similarly mystics do not condescend to show feats of mesmeric and hypnotic powers. Either they give us transport and insight into transcendent reality and take us out of delusion altogether, or they do not touch us at all. It is not becoming on their part to indulge in feats with ordinary phenomena of this world, which would be hardly better than jugglers' tricks. Too exalted and majestic is the true mystic to stoop to such low performances for the vain satisfaction of the blind curiosity of an ignorant multitude.

नाटक चेटक कीए कुकाजा ।
प्रभ लोगन कह आवत लाजा ।

To indulge in the jugglery of supernatural feats,
The mystic feeleth ashamed.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *DASAM GRANTH*, P.54

Further, knowledge gained through mesmerism, hypnotism, and other practices of this sort is confined to this physical creation and its things. It may touch the brink of the subtle astral plane, but can secure no access into it, and the rarer spiritual transcendent realms are altogether beyond its reach. Hence it is of little use in true spirituality, for it does not take us beyond delusion.

Moreover, such powers may be used for good or for evil. We can do a person a world of good if our will power or mind is much stronger than his; we can also do him a lot of harm. It all depends on our moral and spiritual training. But the true mystic path not only strengthens our will power, it also trains our mind to move in the direction of good and away from evil. Therefore, practices like mesmerism and hypnotism are not needed for true spiritual uplift and awakening. That can be achieved only through mystic transport, which enables us to behold, in an eternal moment of absolute consciousness, the profound reality of all being; and in one pulse of transcendent ecstasy, it shows the deep essence of all existence. Mysticism is the real thing, genuine gold; other practices are mere tinsel. Mysticism is a jewel; powers such as mesmerism are only sham imitations of little value.

4 Recapitulation and conclusion

We started with certain fundamental problems of life, and we found that neither philosophy nor religion could cope with them; only mysticism could tackle them. And now we see that within

mysticism too, it is not every kind of mysticism that will solve them, but only the proper, right one. The so-called offshoots of mysticism, such as mesmerism and hypnotism, are merely trained will power or highly practised concentration, which is used for dealing with things of this world. As the mind is focused here on some external point, it keeps us within the limits of phenomena and does not help us in rising up into subtle transcendent realms of absolute reality. That, real mysticism alone can do.

Mystic transport alone opens our inner eyes, and unless our inner eyes are opened, we cannot see reality, we remain in darkness. Thus, mystic training is the first thing in life. To search out a mystic adept should consequently be our first duty in this world, for without a competent teacher we cannot enter the domain of transport.

We should not be carried away by the external polish and outward gloss of tinsel; we have to find pure gold; nay, we have to get rare pearls and rubies and diamonds of the first order. Mesmeric performances which astonish the blind intellect are below even the alphabet of mysticism. Only mystic transport shows us true light and reveals absolute reality; only mysticism solves our problems of life. It is the real thing and the greatest thing for us in this world.



CHAPTER FIVE

Objections to Mysticism Considered

ALTHOUGH MYSTICISM takes us out of darkness and delusion, and by opening our inner eyes removes all our ignorance, yet various are the charges that have been laid at its door.

1 Is mysticism mere nothingness?

In the first place, transport has been described as mere nothingness, as a blank negation of thought. As was already pointed out, philosophers argue: When thought is suspended, what else can remain in consciousness? They conclude that it must be nothing, for they are aware of no other consciousness except thought consciousness. When we close our eyes, we have mere darkness before us, and we think that everybody experiences only darkness when he shuts his eyes. When we go to bed, we either dream or enter a state of unconsciousness. From this we infer that when mystics 'sleep', they also have a lower order of consciousness, of dreams, or no consciousness in sound sleep. But this is a wrong conclusion; we cannot apply the analogy here. Although mystics close their eyes and apparently go to sleep, their soul is awake and they experience spiritual flights into subtle transcendent realms.

This, of course, can never be logically proved to a layperson, just as colour and light cannot be proved to the blind. But if we do not know of a thing, we have no right to say that it does not exist. At best we can plead our ignorance of it, but with no show of reason can we positively assert its non-existence.

To the ignorant, mystic transport may be nothing indeed, but for the knowing, it is everything. By denying it, we deny the very reality on which all thought and all things depend. Transport is our very being unveiled and unrolled; it is the soul of the whole cosmos, unearthed and laid bare. Mystics are as certain of it as we are of our own existence. Nay, their certainty is even more positive and absolute.

What does it matter if we are ignorant? That does not affect the existence of spiritual insight and mystic transport. We do not know these things now, but we may know them one day. Our ignorance at this moment should not lead us to make the sweeping statement that there is nothing beyond thought. If we are reasonable, we can at best say that we do not know; we can take up a neutral position. But to deny transport outright would betray extreme presumption and bias on our part.

2 Is mysticism delusion?

But there are others who, although admitting the existence of mystic vision, still look upon it as sheer delusion. According to these people, what we see is merely the reflection of our own thoughts. They claim that we get certain suggestions from the mystic adept which work on our mind and bring up before our mental eye those very pictures, hints of which we have already received.

These people say that mystic visions are all due to an intensely excited imagination and highly wrought fancy; we see nothing that may have objective reality; we are so wrapped up in our own subjective thoughts and ideas. It is hardly better than ordinary

visions and daydreams. In short, what the mystics see in their transport is nothing real and objective, it is sheer delusion, imagination and fancy – the coinage of one's own brain and the outcome of one's own ideas. Such is the charge.

Now, mystic knowledge contains its truth in itself; it is its own truth, and for this reason it is extremely hard to prove it by intellectual argumentation. Yet reasons may be given to show that it is not delusion; it is not mere imagination and fancy; it is not only subjective dreaming.

Firstly, through mystic transport we can have knowledge of this world, as well as of higher subtle planes. Mystic knowledge about things of this world can be tested by an actual enquiry with our physical organs. And because the knowledge received through transport agrees with the result of enquiry made through the physical senses, this is conclusive proof that mystic insight is not delusion.

With regard to mystic knowledge about things of higher planes, we know that imagination and fancy cannot create entirely new things; they can only make new combinations of old things. This is an established fact of psychology. Now, mystics state that the things which they perceive in their transport are not like things of this world. They are of a different kind altogether; they belong to a different category. If this is so, then mystic knowledge cannot be mere imagination.

Through suggestion from the mystic adept, we can only imagine things of this world; but what we see in transport is something else. That we cannot imagine, for it is beyond all our past experience and different from it, not only in degree but in kind. The blind person cannot know colours through being told of them from us; the blindness must be cured to perceive colours, to be able to know them. For mystics, we are blind; we must get our inner eyes opened to see transcendent entities and experience transport into subtle, spiritual planes. The things that mystics see

bear no resemblance to things of this world; their experiences are transcendent and beyond description. How can they give us an exact verbal suggestion?

And whatever their suggestion, the real experience of transport is very different from such a suggestion. The suggestion would be an intellectual understanding, but the mystic experience is a spiritual becoming; the one is mere theory, the other a transcendent realization, beyond and above all thought.

So it is clear that if mystic knowledge belongs to an order altogether different from our usual experience; it is not delusion or mere fancy. If the things of transport are truly of a different kind from things of this world, then they also are real.

But now the question arises that if these so-called transcendent entities which the mystics experience in their transport are really things of a different order, is it not possible that although in reality those things are of the same kind as the things of this world, yet the mystics wrongly believe them to be otherwise?

Before we discuss this possibility, let us see who is to judge it. If those who are blind persist in telling us that light and colour are not reality but a delusion, shall we give up our position? Is it for them to judge whether or not light and colour are things of a different order from the objects of their experience? No, it is we who must decide. They are blind; we see. For us, light and colour are immediate facts of consciousness which need no other argument or testimony for their proof. They are their own proof. Similarly, mystics know it as an immediate fact of superconsciousness that things of their transport are really things of a different order from what we experience in this world. Their spiritual experience is its own proof; it needs no other proof for its validity and truth.

ਇਕ ਦਿਨ ਸਭਾ ਉਲੂਆਂ ਲਾਈ

ਬੈਠੇ ਮਿਲ ਨਰ ਨਾਰੀ ਜੀ।

ਇਕ ਕੋਹਦਾ ਸੂਰਜ ਨਹੀਂ ਚੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਕੌਣ ਕਰੇਂ ਉਜੜਾਰੀ ਜੀ।

ਦੂਜੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਚੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਸਦਾ ਰਾਤ ਅੰਧਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਵਾਰੀ ਵਾਰੀ ਸਭੇ ਬੋਲੇ ਕਰ ਕਰ ਸੋਚ ਵਿਚਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਓਹਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਵੱਡਾ ਉਲੂ ਬਾਣੀ ਓਸ ਉਚਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਸੂਰਜ ਤੀਨ ਕਾਲ ਹੀ ਹੈ ਨਹੀਂ ਝੂਠੀ ਖਲਕਤ ਸਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਸੂਰਜ ਅੱਜ ਤੀਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਡਿੱਠਾ ਵੱਡੀ ਉਮਰ ਹਮਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਜੋ ਕੋਈ ਸੂਰਜ ਸੱਚਾ ਮੰਨੇ ਅਕਲ ਓਸਦੀ ਮਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਏਕ ਹੰਸ ਟੀਸੀ ਤੇ ਬੈਠਾ ਉਸਨੇ ਉੱਚ ਪੁਕਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਹੈ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤ ਦੇਖ ਲੋ ਸਾਰੇ ਲੱਖਾਂ ਕਿਰਣ ਪਸਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਨਾਨਾ ਚਮਕਾਂ ਦਮਕਾਂ ਮਾਰੇ ਸੂਰਜ ਅਤਿ ਬਲਕਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਖੁਦ ਰੋਸ਼ਨ ਫਿਰ ਸਬਕੀ ਆਖੋਂ ਰੋਸ਼ਣ ਕੀਨ ਅਪਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਚਮਗਾਦੜ ਘੁੱਗ ਆ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਮੁਨਸਫ਼ ਭਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਝੂਠਾ ਹੰਸ ਤੇ ਸੱਚੇ ਉਲੂ ਕੀਆ ਨਿਆਇ ਸੰਭਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਉਲੂ ਸਭ ਟੈ ਟੈ ਕਰ ਹੱਸੇ ਹੰਸ ਮੋਨ ਤਬ ਧਾਰੀ ਜੀ।
ਚਤੁਰਦਾਸ ਏਹ ਅਜਬ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਤੀਨ ਲੋਕ ਸੋਂ ਨਜ਼ਾਰੀ ਜੀ।

One day the owls called a meeting;
All, male and female, assembled.
One said, "The sun has not risen, who will give light?"
Another uttered, "Never has it risen;
It is always pitch dark."
Turn by turn, after much reflection, everyone spoke.
There was one elderly owl among them, who stated,
"The sun has never existed; all the people are wrong.
I have not seen the sun up to this day,
Although I have reached this old age.
Whoever believes in the existence of the sun is a fool."
A swan shouted from the top of the tree:
"It is broad daylight, all can see;
Millions of rays are spread.
With his dazzling light, the sun is very powerful;
Self-luminous, he gives light to all eyes."
Bats and owls appeared there – both great judges!
They gave their thoughtful verdict:

The swan was wrong and the owls were right.
All the owls hooted in laughter;
The swan then kept quiet.
This is a strange court, O Chaturdas,
Different from the three worlds.

CHATURDAS, *DARIAI VEHDAT* 70

When we wake up from sleep, do we ask for proof to believe that we have really woken up, that we are no longer in a sleeping condition, and that the waking consciousness is different from sleep? The waking itself is enough to convince us of the change. We know the change as a fact of immediate consciousness. The fact of waking is its own proof.

Similarly, for mystics we are in a slumber. We come to know of it as soon as we wake up into their transcendent ecstasy. There is no other proof to show that mystic transport is a higher order of consciousness. In sleep, we consider our dreams to be real, but the moment we wake up, we know which the reality is, dreams or waking. It is self-evident to us then that dreams are unreal, or at least that this world is more real than the dream world. Similarly, but with a greater certainty mystics know that the world of transport is a greater reality than this physical world. Their transport is its own proof. Neither can any other logical proof be given, nor is it needed.

We require no proof for our own existence; why should mystics want proof of transcendent truths which are known to them more intimately than our existence is to us? If mystics are otherwise sane and sensible people, it will be our prejudice and obstinacy if we persist in saying that they cannot judge mystic transport, that they wrongly take it to be a superconscious state.

What proof of light and colour can those born blind demand from us? What proof can we give them? None, except by restoring their vision and showing them light and colour. Either they

should believe us, or experience these things themselves. There is no other way to decide the question. Similarly, with regard to transcendent knowledge, there are only two ways open to us. Either we should believe mystics, or try to experience transport and see for ourselves.

Several people who began with doubt have ended with transcendent knowledge and belief. Seeing is indeed believing. The history of mystic schools is a standing record of the fact that belief has invariably come with seeing, and there is not even a single case in which someone had transport but did not believe.

So long as we do not make an effort to experience transport ourselves, we should confess our ignorance, and do so with good grace. If we do not know, we should not say that it is impossible. Mystics have at least as much right to say that we are in delusion as we have to call them so. This does not settle the point. The right position for us is to say that we do not know. And if we are very anxious to find out what mystic knowledge is, we can try the experiment ourselves. Then only shall we be in a position to speak on the matter. Let us see for ourselves before we pass judgement.

आप आप को आप पिछानो । कहा और का नेक न मानो ॥

Oh, know thyself by thy self;
Believe not at all what others say.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 24:1:62

Mystic knowledge is not blind belief, but actual realization; it is not delusion, but transcendent reality. If we also want to know this, we should try the method of transport.

Moreover, it is not only the things of transport that are of a different order from the things of this world, but mystic consciousness itself is also different from waking or dreaming consciousness. It is superconsciousness. Just as the waking condition

is more conscious than dreaming, similarly transport is a higher consciousness than waking. And the proof that it is really super-consciousness is that superconsciousness itself. Nothing else can ever prove or disprove it.

Further, mystic knowledge changes our very being. It gives us power to live up to our knowledge; it takes us out of the fire of sensual passions, lands us in the cool and calm abode of extreme bliss and beatitude and gives us transcendent knowledge of everything. If it were mere delusion and imagination it could not have the power of changing our habits, our actions and our very nature.

Delusion cannot bring us true peace and lasting bliss. It cannot give us transcendent knowledge of reality; it cannot take us above phenomena into the very heart of *noumena*. And if it does, it is well worth having. Who would not hug such a delusion as gives one perfect satisfaction, knowledge and bliss? Then it would be a delusion in name only; in reality it cannot be a delusion.

Mystic knowledge makes us heavenly in the true sense; it makes us saintly and divine. Truths of transport enter our very being and become part and parcel of us, the essence of ourselves. They colour all our thinking and doing; they control and guide our life of action, of thought and of feeling; they change us into God himself.

Mystic knowledge is not a gradual assimilation, like intellectual understanding; it is a flash of transcendent light that shows us all things in their true colour in a moment of eternal consciousness; it transforms our very being, all in an instant – through a mystic adept.

ਜਿਨਿ ਮਾਣਸ ਤੇ ਦੇਵਤੇ ਕੀਏ ਕਰਤ ਨ ਲਾਗੀ ਵਾਰ ॥

He hath turned humans into divine beings,
And no time hath he taken in doing this.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.462

By entering the fold of mysticism, bad people give up their wrongdoing, wicked people become pious and saintly, the spiritually weak gain strength to be good and noble, wailing and weeping humanity becomes happy and contented, and all attain everlasting bliss and beatitude.

The effect of mystic transport is marvellous. It brings about tremendous changes in our lives. History shows that through spiritual influence butchers like Sadna become pure and godly, prostitutes like Ganika attain true peace and bliss, and robbers like Bidhi Chand are tamed and purified. Surely it is not a delusion that can bring about such a remarkable change in people's character.

Mysticism is deeply rooted in reality. It is reality alone that can eradicate firm set habits of many years (and perhaps of many lives), that can change the very nature of a person and give one another personality, so to speak.

And lastly, what is told to the disciple by the spiritual adept is far too little to have any bearing on what the disciple actually experiences in transport. No details are mentioned, and those, in any case, are too many to be described, but the experiences of all mystics still agree in every minute detail. If mystic knowledge were really delusion and the outcome of subjective fancy and imagination, universal agreement would be an impossibility. But the fact is that the mystic experiences of one person invariably tally with those of others, in every single item and detail.

ایں خبر ہاویں روایاتِ محقق صد ہزاراں پیر بروئے متفق

These are truths upon which
Hundreds and thousands of mystic adepts
Are agreed.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:4134

یک خلائے فی میانِ ایں عیون آچنناں کہ ہست در علم ظنون

Not even by a hair's breadth do they differ,
As intellectually learned people do.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:4135

There may be, and is, much difference among various religions, for they rely on intellect, but there is never any difference among true mystics, for they know with the transcendent power of transport. What they experience is objective reality, which is the same for all. It is not mystics who disagree, but some of their so-called followers who, being ignorant of true mystic realization, depend for their belief on individual interpretation of spiritual writings, which leaves room for difference and discord.

In true mystic knowledge, there is no scope for difference or doubt, for it is not a matter of opinion and guesswork; it is a transcendent perception of objective reality on a plane of consciousness higher than the intellect and subtler than the senses. And along with other reasons, this universal agreement is also a conclusive proof that mystic transport is not a delusion.

3 Does mysticism teach selfishness?

Another indictment against mysticism is that it teaches selfishness. Is it not selfish on our part, critics say, to sit in a secluded corner, trying to improve our own soul and neglecting all the rest of the world? Is it not better to help the progress of one's country, or humanity as a whole, than to give all our attention to the betterment of either a single soul or of a solitary few?

Obviously it is; it really is selfish to seek one's own progress and improvement and neglect thousands of human beings who are crying and wailing, helpless and forlorn. Clearly, if someone aims at the improvement of the individual self rather than the advancement of all, that person is selfish. It needs no proof to convince us that the good of one is of less importance than the good of two,

that the good of two is of less consequence than that of three, and so on. Thus the good of a larger number is better than the good of a smaller group, and the greatest good is the good of all. In fact, our aim should be not only the good of the human race but the good of all, including animals, beasts, birds, insects and, if possible, even plants and stones. The question, therefore, as already pointed out earlier, is: What is good and how can it be realized?

What is good? Ethical philosophers have written volumes in answer to this question, but there is a great divergence among their views. Some consider happiness to be the greatest good, the *summum bonum*, some self-realization, some true knowledge, some love, some various combinations of these and some an all-round harmonious life. Now, how can we find out what good really is?

As stated already, we are ignorant and blind; we are unaware of our own real self. We know not the profound truth of our being, nor the deep essence of this ephemeral world. We experience only phenomena; reality is hidden to our shallow and superficial view. Under these circumstances, can we know what good is unless we first open our eyes and see, unless we first know ourselves and our surroundings, unless we know the meaning and significance of all this phenomena? No, we cannot.

Now what does mysticism teach us? Does it want us to attend to our own good and neglect others? No, not at all. Mysticism merely opens our eyes so that we may see and know ourself and our environment, and having known these, find out what true good is and thus be in a position to do good to ourselves as well as to others.

It is only when we reach the stage of transcendent consciousness that we can truly talk of doing good; before that we merely grope in the dark. And this transcendent knowledge cannot be obtained except through mystic transport. Mystics do not tell us to mind our own interest and become selfish; they only ask us to open our eyes and see, and be *able* to help others, before we think or talk of doing so.

We are all blind, and still we are anxious to show others the right path. If one blind person leads another, both will fall into a ditch. First we should open our own eyes, and then think of leading others. Our house is on fire, yet we go to other people to extinguish their fire. But alas, we do not know how to put out a fire. In our blind effort we get burned ourselves, and the devouring flame consumes all. We should first of all look after our own house and learn how to extinguish fire before we go to help others. Swami Rama Tirtha has rightly said: "Reformers are wanted not of others, but of themselves" – we should first of all reform our own self.

मनहीं को परमोधिये, मनहीं को उपदेस ।
जो यहि मन को बसि करै (तो) सिष्य होय सब देस ॥

Reform thou thy mind,
And preach thou to thine own mind.
If this mind cometh under thy control,
Then shall the whole world follow thee.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.147:20

ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ ॥

By conquering thy mind, do thou conquer the world.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.6

a. Mistake of religious zealots

Before we have opened our own eyes and saved our own selves, most of us become anxious about others and take on the role of preacher. But first we should look to ourselves. If our own transcendent eyes are not open, how can we lead others on the right track? If we have not found true happiness and peace of mind ourselves, how can we console others and give peace to their

minds? If we have no light ourselves, what light shall we show to other people?

पंडित केरी पोथियाँ, ज्यों तीतर को ज्ञान ।
औरन सगुन बतावही, अपना फंद न जान ॥

The books of the pundit (learned man)
Are like the knowledge of the partridge,
Which telleth others a good or bad omen,
But knoweth not its own snare.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.167:10

Similarly, we go out into the world to preach to others and wander about from place to place, ever anxious to reform human-kind and put people on the right path, but never do we care to look into our own selves, nor do we seek true peace for our own mind. How strange that we are ourselves in the dark, but extremely anxious to lead others! We should find a light for our own guidance first and only then think of showing others the way to God.

b. Mysticism helps to achieve the good

Mysticism alone can give us that transcendent light. In the waking state we perceive phenomena; in mystic transport we experience *noumena* or 'things in themselves', to use a Kantian phrase. Transport unveils to us the transcendent reality of all things, so that we may know rightly, and having known, act rightly; so that we may know good, and then be able to do good to others as well as to ourselves.

Mysticism not only tells us what good is, it also enables us to achieve that good; it teaches us how to do real good to others. Far from making us selfish, it broadens our mental and moral horizon and makes us truly selfless and benevolent. Prophets widen our outlook, but priests narrow it.

Mysticism discards the superficial and shallow idea of unselfishness; it places before us the higher ideal of doing good to the souls of people, of transporting them to transcendent realms and liberating them from the thralldom of karmas and causation. This highest good mystics do to all who give them their devotion and who desire such a transcendent good. Mystics are the most unselfish of all people, and they do the greatest possible good to all beings.

People have very strange notions about mystics. When they think of them, they imagine some unearthly being sitting in a wild fashion in a lonely corner of a remote forest, counting the beads of a rosary or offering their prayer to God with a melancholy face and a depressed look. Well, there may be mystics of that sort, but there are mystics of the other sort as well. Any friend of ours, one who is apparently as much a person of the world as we are, may turn out to be a mystic and surprise us. Anyone who has experienced transport is a mystic. We should not go by appearances; they are often deceptive.

Mystics' inner vision is open and they see reality; their penetrating eye comprehends in its outlook both heaven and earth; their spiritual insight reveals to them transcendent entities beyond the portals of death. Our view is confined to the phenomena of this world, and our good limited to the concerns of this physical plane, but mystic insight grasps all infinity and eternity in one pulse of transcendent consciousness, and the good of the mystics is highest and most absolute. It is the good of the spirit; it is the true, intrinsic and real good.

Only by realizing this ourselves shall we be in a position to do good to others; only by opening our own eyes shall we be fit to show others the right way; only by learning transport ourselves shall we be able to take the souls of others as well to that high pinnacle of superconscious rapture and divine glory. This is the way to be truly benevolent and selfless.

Mystics transport our souls from this lowest and grossest creation into subtle transcendent realms of pure spirituality; they take us out of this delusion and darkness of phenomena into the light of absolute reality. They do good to our very being, to our essence, to our soul, and their good is everlasting and eternal. They pull us out of the fire of hell, carry us on the wings of love and place us in the lap of our heavenly Father. From this prison of matter, they liberate our soul and take it home to God. What greater good can there possibly be?

4 Contradictions in mystic books

Further, people say that mystic literature abounds in contradictory statements. Our full answer to this objection has already been given earlier, where it is explained that so-called contradictions are only skin-deep. The contradiction lies in the words, not in the truth expressed therein.

Reality is so comprehensive and transcendent that it cannot even vaguely be expressed except in contradictory terms. There are various grades of reality, and corresponding to them, there are various degrees of truth. What is true for one stage of reality may not be true for a higher spiritual plane. Thus to a person who is not initiated into mystic secrets, utterances of mystics from different stages of reality or planes of consciousness would appear contradictory.

When, during mystic transport, the soul flies up into subtler spiritual realms of transcendent reality, all contradictions evaporate. The contradiction is not in the reality or truth, but only in the verbal expression of it. It exists only for the frail, limited human intellect, not for the penetrating, spiritual, transcendent insight of the mystic.

The fact is that reality evades all description, and any attempt to put it into words must lead to verbal contradictions, but once

we experience transport and go up into transcendent realms, all mystery is solved and all contradiction reconciled.

5 Repetition in mystic writings

And the last accusation against mysticism – a petty one – is that its books contain too much of repetition, and we suppose to some extent all mystics would plead guilty to the charge. But alas, in spite of all this repetition, we still do not understand them; we do not care to listen to them; we do not think of what they say.

The mystics come into the world with a definite message from God, and what else should they do but deliver that message to us again and again in various forms and ways? The message is so sublime, exalted and weighty that no repetition of it can be too much. But we turn a deaf ear to them. We do not let their divine message enter our head and our heart. If our dear heavenly Father and Lord invites us into his blissful mansions, is this invitation not worth listening to a thousand times? And can such welcome news lose its charm by repetition?

So firstly, mystics must give us their message over and over again, for that is the object of their advent into this world; secondly, the more weighty the message, the greater the number of repetitions that it needs; and lastly, if a thing is true, it is true whether uttered once or many times. Repetition may be considered a fault by the narrow view of linguistic beauty, but spiritual transport transcends all such superficial niceties. It is the one profound truth of life and the ultimate reality of the universe. If that is not to be told again and again, what else is?

Compared with transport and its transcendent entities, this world and its doings are a sham, mere children's play, but we attach too much importance to institutions and activities of this world. When we conquer other lands and win big battles, we pride ourselves on our achievement. We boast of our fresh discoveries

and new inventions, and talk of our vast knowledge and huge enterprises. Some peoples are proud of their freedom and liberty; others are still struggling to be free. We cry for *swaraaj*, self-government, and look upon it as perhaps the greatest thing. But even such momentous affairs of the world – momentous from our point of view – are, for the true mystic, only children's sport:

بادشاہ دنیا کے ہیں مہرے میری شطرنج کے

Kings of the world are but pieces of my chessboard.

SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

In one pulse of universal consciousness, the mystic sees thousands of worlds being created and dissolved and thousands of worlds sweeping through the infinity of space and rolling in the eternity of time, and then he looks beyond all time and space, beyond heaven and hell, beyond cosmos and chaos, beyond past, present and future, and beholds the divine light of absolute truth, enters the supreme essence of the ultimate transcendent being and becomes one with that being. What care can he have for our petty things?

It is due to our stunted vision that we look upon the activities of this world as great things. In the light of mystic transport, they dwindle into extreme insignificance and vanish out of sight. Mystic truths are the paramount realities of life and the profound secrets of the universe; why should they not be talked of again and again?

6 Summary and conclusion

Thus, transport is not nothingness, nor a delusion or a creation of our own imagination. It is a transcendent experience of objective reality. Mysticism does not teach us to be selfish; it

merely opens our inner eye, so that we may look before we leap and know before we act. In fact it makes us most unselfish, in the real sense of the word.

Now the question arises: what are the various mystic practices that take us into the sphere of transport? And what is the reach or efficacy of each? We want to know this so that we may choose the very best, one which may easily and safely transport us into the highest and last stage of absolute transcendence. In the next Part, therefore, we shall take up the question of mystic practices and mystic schools. The final part is devoted to Surat Shabd Yoga, which is one of the practices better suited to our modern lifestyle.

PART THREE

Mystic Schools

CHAPTER ONE

Mystic Cosmology

I Mysticism for true seekers

Mysticism is not meant for everybody; only keen and earnest seekers will tread this difficult path.

ਕੋਟਿ ਮਧੇ ਕੋ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਹੋਰਿ ਸਗਲੇ ਬਿਉਹਾਰੀ ॥

True devotees of thine, (O Lord), are only a few;
With others it is sheer routine.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.495

ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੋਟਨ ਮੈ ਕੋਉ ਭਜਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੋ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Hardly one in millions, O Nanak,
Findeth the mystic path to the Lord.

GURU TEGH BAHADUR, ADI GRANTH, P.219

इदं वाच तज्ज्येष्ठाय पुत्राय पिता ब्रह्म प्रब्रूयात्प्रणाय्याय वान्तेवासिने ।
नान्यस्मै कस्मैचन यद्यप्यस्मा इमामद्भिः परिगृहीतां धनस्य पूर्णां
दद्यादेतदेव ततो भूय इत्येतदेव ततो भूय इति ॥

Either to the eldest son or a worthy disciple
Who hath lived long with his Master

May mystic knowledge be imparted, but to no one else.
 Not even a treasure that may fill the whole sea-girt earth
 Would be price enough for giving mystic knowledge.

CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD III:11:5-6

Mystic initiation is meant only for the deserving; all and sundry cannot aspire to have access into transcendent realms, for it requires a great sacrifice. We have to sacrifice the whole world, nay even our own self, before we can have a glimpse of the inner truth and absolute reality. This sacrifice or renunciation, however, is not physical but of the mind.

Gross and worldly minded, we are unfit for transcendent flights; thoughts of personal gain and hollow honour fill our minds, and all sorts of earthly sordid desires pollute our hearts. Most people become slaves of mammon and pass all their days hoarding riches and going from door to door for the sake of money, but you cannot serve God and mammon both.

यथैव बिम्बं मृदयोपलिप्तं तेजोमयं भ्राजते तत्सुधान्तम् ।
 तद्वात्मतत्त्वं प्रसमीक्ष्य देही एकः कृतार्थो भवते वीतशोकः ॥

Just as a mirror cleansed of its impurities
 Becometh lustrous and reflecteth a bright image,
 Even thus doth the mystic behold himself
 At the height of his spiritual transport
 And attain the goal of his endeavour.

SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD II:14

The tablet of the mind must be cleansed of all impurities before it can become fit to receive truths of absolute transcendence; the rust of materialism must be scratched off the mind to enable the soul to shine in its own resplendence.

ਜਨਮ ਜਨਮ ਕੇ ਲਾਗੇ ਬਿਖੁ ਮੋਰਚਾ
ਲਗਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਸਵਾਰੀ ॥

With sensual desires of many lives is this mind rusty;
And by the company of mystics alone is it cleansed.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.666

Before we aspire to experience transport into transcendent realms, our mind must first be purified by the elevating company and discourses of mystics. Conventional religions will not do. Ordinary religions will satisfy those people who look upon spiritual enquiry as a secondary thing, who are content with this present life without bothering about the past or caring for the future, and who are too much taken up with the activities of this world to think of the next. They are carried along by the current of events; they lead a blind life, neither knowing nor endeavouring to know what they are and where they are going. Mysticism is not for such people.

There are others, however, who are not satisfied with phenomena, but want to probe deeper into reality. They feel they are in the dark and therefore seek light; they find misery and evil in this world and hence search for true happiness. They know they have to die one day and consequently want to be prepared for it beforehand. They are eminently fitted for mystic training. They do not want to be led by the nose, like dumb driven cattle, or to grope in the dark like one who is blind; they desire to have their eyes opened and their ears unsealed so that they may see spiritual sights and hear heavenly harmony. For those who would look before they leap and think before they act, mysticism is indispensable. For them, before taking a plunge into the bustle of life, their first concern is to open their eyes.

Although it is not easy to do the mystic practice, yet it is worth our while attempting it, for it gives us light, it opens our

inner eyes and it shows us the reality behind appearances. It is only by mystic transport that we can cross the threshold of death during this lifetime and, with our own eyes, see what is happening on the other side. Therefore, we should gird up our loins to follow the mystic path of true realization.

برودر پیشه معنی چو شیراں چه گرگ دزد و بگفتار گشتی

Go thou into the forests of reality like a lion;
Why hast thou turned into a wolf, a fox and a hyena?

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P. 401

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

BIBLE, *1 CORINTHIANS* 16:13

2 Planes of consciousness

As already mentioned, waking consciousness is not the highest; several superconscious states exist above and beyond the waking condition. We may call these states *stages* or *planes of consciousness*; in Hindi, they are called *avastha*. If we start from the lowest rung of this ladder of graded consciousness, we should begin with:

a. Sound sleep, *sushupti avastha* (सुषुप्ति)

This is a state of sound sleep in which there is no consciousness at all. This is the bottom of the scale of consciousness.

Moving upwards we first come to *swapan*.

b. Dream state, *swapan avastha* (स्वप्न)

In the *swapan* or dream state we have a very dim, vague and foggy consciousness. In this there is hardly any thinking; the mind is hurriedly carried through a vast mass of confused ideas

which appear to be a disorderly and disjointed series of undefined perceptions. This is so because dream consciousness is characterized by the absence of the restraining and controlling power of the will.

When we wake up, we remember only a part of our dreams, and that too very vaguely and dimly. Further, various items of our dreams do not fit well together, for they are sometimes opposed to one another. We can hardly make head or tail of our dream consciousness. Neither clear, nor stable, nor reliable, it is always shifting its focus and moving from place to place in a most unsystematic and haphazard manner.

The next stage or plane is *jaagrat avastha*.

c. Waking state, jaagrat avastha (जाग्रत अवस्था)

In this waking state, consciousness is much clearer and brighter than in dreams. Here we can think and reason logically, for although we are still carried by the current of events, it is not to the same extent as in dreams. In the waking condition our experiences are systematic and consistent and our perceptions clearer and more stable. Here we know where we stand, although our knowledge is confined to appearance or phenomena. Regarding reality, we are still in the dark. However, in respect of clearer consciousness, greater permanence and stability, and less confusion and contradiction, this plane is much superior to dreamland.

But this too is not satisfactory. Intellect, the highest faculty on this plane, is unreliable. At the level of the senses and intellect we are blind and ignorant; we cannot know transcendent truth. Our perceptions are confined to physical things, and our intellect struggles in vain for absolute knowledge, which it cannot achieve and which can be had only at a higher plane of consciousness.

Going upwards from the waking state and leaving some minor stages in between, we reach the plane of *turiya avastha*.

*d. Subtle consciousness, turiya avastha (तुरिया अवस्था)
and above*

Turiya is the consciousness of the astral plane, where all things are subtle and astral, nothing is gross or physical. As compared with waking consciousness, the clearer, higher and more intense consciousness of this plane is as waking is to dreaming. When the soul of a person reaches this stage, the brain and physical organs cease to work, just as in sleep or trance, and only the spiritual and astral faculties work.

The consciousness of this plane is superhuman, for it pierces the veil of phenomena and knows reality in its astral form. Being subtle, the astral cannot be seen with the physical eyes, perceived with any other of the five senses, or known with the intellect. Therefore, this stage and those above it, which are still subtler – and there are several such – are open to mystic transport alone.

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ॥

Neither by word of mouth, nor by the mind,
Nor by the eyes is it possible to realize God.

KATHA UPANISHAD 11:3:12

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषी मनसाऽभिवृत्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

Never has anyone been able
To visualize God by means of sight,
Nor by the heart is it possible to realize him,
Nor by imagination, nor by the mind.
Who knows this sublime truth
Becomes immortal.

KATHA UPANISHAD 11:3:9

ਅਖੀ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਕੰਨਾ ਸੁਨਣਾ ॥
 ਪੈਰਾ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਚਲਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਹਥਾ ਕਰਣਾ ॥
 ਜੀਭੈ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਇਉ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰਣਾ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਉ ਖਸਮੈ ਮਿਲਣਾ ॥

Seeing without eyes, hearing without ears,
 Walking without feet, working without hands,
 Speaking without tongue –
 Thus die while living, O Nanak.
 By knowing His will,
 You shall find the Beloved.

GURU ANGAD, ADI GRANTH, P.139

न चक्षुषा गृह्यते नापि वाचा नान्यैर्देवैस्तपसा कर्मणा वा ।
 ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्वस्ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः ॥

Only when by the clearness
 Of illumination and after meditation
 A perfect catharsis of the whole moral being
 takes place
 Is one able to realize the immaculate God;
 For neither by sight, nor by word of mouth,
 Nor by any other sense, nor by penance,
 Nor by any actions whatsoever can he be attained.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD III:1:8

Access to these higher planes is possible during one's life-time by mystic practices performed under the guidance of a perfect adept, but before we come to the practices which take us into those subtle spiritual planes, we may take a glance at the plan of creation as realized and stated by the mystics of the highest order.

3 Divisions of creation

For convenience, the whole creation may be divided into four planes: material, materio-spiritual, causal-spiritual and purely spiritual. Each plane is again subdivided into several classes according to the degree of subtlety, spirituality and transcendence they possess.

a. Material creation, *pind*

Pind (पिण्ड) refers to both the material creation and the physical body. It contains six centres of subtle matter, which Persian mystics call *lataif-i sittah* (لطائف سته) and Hindus call the *khat (shat) chakras* (षट् चक्र), the six focuses or ganglions in the body or matter. The first or the lowest is *guda chakra*.

(1) *Guda chakra* (गुदा चक्र), *perineal centre*: This is a four-petalled lotus or *kamal* (चार दल कँवल) and the place of the god Ganesh (गणेश) or Ganpati (गणपति), or in Sufism of Adam.* It is also called *aadhaar* (आधार) or *moolaadhaara* (मूलाधार) *chakra*; its focus is at the perineum and its colour is light reddish.† It is the seat of *prithvi tatt* (पृथ्वी तत्त), the earth element, and is the *mool kamal* (मूल कँवल), the first stage of the yogis, who do the repetition of the word '*kaling*' (कलिंग) here.

मूल कँवल दल चतुर बखानो । कलिंग जाप लाल रँग मानो ।
देव गनेस तहँ रोपा थानो । ऋध सिध चँवर दुलारा है ॥

* Adam is the first man in Islam as well as Judaism. He is also considered to be the first prophet and Sufis consider him to be the first Sufi.

† There is variation in different texts on the particulars, such as the colours of the chakras. The editors have retained L. R. Puri's description of the colours associated with each chakra.

First is the four-petalled lotus –
'Kaling' is its recitation and red its colour.
 God Ganesh is the presiding deity,
 Over whom *riddhis* and *siddhis* (supernatural powers)
 Wave the ceremonial fly-whisk, the *chauri*.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.65:3

At this stage a person's will power is strengthened so that work can be done with a set mind, and thus the chances of success in one's undertakings are enhanced; but beyond that there is no spiritual enlightenment here.

Here the kundalini (कुण्डलिनी) or *naagini* (नागिनी), 'she-serpent', can be turned to rise up through the *sushumna* (सुषुम्ना) channel along the spinal cord, which, like the Grand Trunk Road, connects all the centres. Then its power can be awakened, brought under control, and utilized. The yoga which aims at doing this has been called kundalini yoga.

A human being is like an inverted tree whose root, so to speak, is in the brain, whence all energy comes that sustains the lower centres. The further a centre is from the brain, the less is its power. Each centre supports the next lower centre. This chakra is therefore sustained by the next higher centre, the *indri chakra*.

(2) *Indri chakra* (इन्द्री चक्र), *genital centre*: This is a six-petalled lotus (छः दल कँवल) and the place of the god Brahma (ब्रह्मा) or in Sufism of the angel Mikhail (میکائیل). It is also called *swaad chakra* (स्वाद चक्र), the pleasure centre, or *swaadhishtaan* (स्वाधिष्ठान). Its focus is at the organ of reproduction, and it represents the creative power. Therefore, it is said that Brahma creates the whole universe. Its light is yellowish; it is the seat of *paani tatt* (पानी तत्त) or the water element, and is the second stage of the yogis, who repeat the word '*onkaar*' (ओंकार) here.

स्वाद चक्र षटदल बिस्तारो । ब्रह्म सावित्री रूप निहारो ।
उलटि नागिनी का सिर मारो । तहाँ सब्द ओंकारा है ॥

The pleasure centre is a six-petalled lotus;
Behold thou god Brahma
And the goddess Savitri (his consort).
Take thou a somersault and strike at the head
Of the she-serpent or kundalini.
The recitation here is '*onkaar*'.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 65: 4

This chakra gets energy from the next higher centre, the *naabhi chakra*.

(3) *Naabhi chakra* (नाभी चक्र), *solar plexus centre*: This is an eight-petalled lotus (अष्टदल कैवल) and the place of god Vishnu (विष्णु), or in Sufism of the angel Israfil (إسرافيل). It is also called the *manipurak chakra* (मनीपूरक चक्र). Its focus is at the navel and it represents the sustaining and nourishing power.

From this centre arteries carry food energy to different parts of the human system. Some supply energy to the head, some to the heart, some to the liver, some to the arms and legs and so on. Therefore, it is said that Vishnu nourishes the whole world.

Its light is bluish, it is the seat of *agni tatt* (अग्नि तत्त), the fire element, and is the third stage of the yogis, who repeat the word '*hiring*' (हिरिंग) here.

नाभी अष्ट कैवल दल साजा । सेत सिंघासन बिस्तु बिराजा ।
हिरिंग जाय तासु मुख गाजा । लछमी सिव आधार है ॥

The *naabhi* centre is an eight-petalled lotus.
On a white throne sitteth Vishnu.
Recitation of '*hiring*' doth he utter,

And receiveth he support from the god Shiva
And goddess Lakshhmi (the consort of Vishnu).

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 65:5

As this chakra gets energy from the next higher centre, where the presiding deity is Shiva, we can say that Shiva supports Vishnu. That next centre is the *hridaya chakra*.

(4) *Hridaya chakra* (हृदय चक्र), *heart centre*: Known among Persian mystics as *qalb-i sanobari* (قلب سنوباری), this is a twelve-petalled lotus (बारह दल कँवल) and the place of the god Shiva (शिवा), or in Sufism of the angel Jabrail (جبرائیل). It is also named the *anaahat* or *anahad chakra* (अनहद चक्र). Its focus is at the heart and it represents the destructive power.

Shiva is the lord of *praan shakti* (प्राण शक्ति), the power of breath. It is breath that enables us to drink liquids, to take in morsels of food, and to pass out stools and urine. This centre controls the energy that is used for all these processes.

Its light is whitish; it is the seat of *pavana tatt* (पवन तत्त), the air element, and it is the fourth stage of yogis, who repeat here the word '*sohang*' (सोहं), or '*anahu*' (अनु) among certain Muslim ascetics.

द्वादस कँवल हृदय के माहीं। जंग गौर सिव ध्यान लगाई।
सोहं सब्द तहाँ धुन छाई। गन करें जै जै कारा है॥

The twelve-petalled lotus is in the heart,
Where the god Shiva
With goddess Parvati (his consort)
Sitteth in meditation.
Prevaileth there the recitation of '*sohang*',
And lower gods sing in praise.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 65:6

This chakra gets power from the next higher centre, the *kanth chakra*.

(5) *Kanth chakra* (कंठ चक्र), *throat centre*: This is a sixteen-petalled lotus (सोलह दल कँवल) and the place of the goddess Shakti (शक्ति) or Ashtangi (अष्टांगी), the power that Sufis call Quadrat (قَدْرَة). It is also called the *vishuddh chakra* (विशुद्ध चक्र). Its focus is at the throat and it is the seat of *aakaash tatt* (आकाश तत्त), the ether element. It is the fifth stage of yogis, who repeat the word '*shring*' (शृंग) or '*ashtang*' (अष्टांग) here.

Shakti (literally, power or strength) is called Devi (देवी), the mother of the three gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, for this chakra sustains all the lower centres.

ਏਕਾ ਮਾਈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਵਿਆਈ ਤਿਨਿ ਚੇਲੇ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥
ਇਕੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਭੰਡਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਲਾਏ ਦੀਬਾਣੁ ॥

One goddess gave birth to three deities:
One creates, one sustains and one annihilates.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.7

By mystics of a high order this goddess has been termed *Avi-dya* (अविद्या) or 'ignorance' because, as compared with the supreme consciousness and absolute knowledge of the higher planes, the consciousness of the stage of Shakti is ignorance and delusion.

ਥੋਡਸ ਕੰਵਲ ਕੰਠ ਕੇ ਸਾਹੀਂ। ਤੇਹਿ ਸਥ ਬਸੇ ਅਬਿਯਾ ਭਾਇ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਹਰ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਚੱਕਰ ਫੁਰਾਇ। ਜਹੰ ਋ਙ੍ਗ ਨਾਮ ਤਚਾਰਾ ਹੈ

The sixteen-petalled lotus is in the throat,
In the midst of which resides the goddess Avidya,
Over whom the three gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

Wave the ceremonial fly-whisk, the *chauri*;
'*Shring*' is the recitation here.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.65:7

The next centre is called *aagya chakra*.

(6) *Aagya chakra* (आज्ञा चक्र), *eye centre*: This is a two-petalled lotus (white and black) and the place of *manas* (मन) or mind, which Muslims call *aql* or sometimes *nafs* (نفس). It is also called the *do-dal kamal* (दो दल कैवल) or *kanj kamal* (कंज कैवल). Its focus is behind the two eyes and it is the sixth stage of the yogis. It gives energy to the *kanth chakra*.

ता पर कंज कैवल है भाई । बग भाँरा दुइ रूप लखाई ।
निज मन करत तहाँ ठकुराई । सो नैनन पिछवारा है ॥

Above the *kanth chakra*
Is the *kanj* lotus, O brother,
Where white and black, both colours,
Are to be seen;
The mind itself ruleth there, behind the eyes.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.65:8

All these six centres are in the material creation.

कैवलन भेद किया निर्वारा । यह सब रचना पिंड मँझारा ॥

The secret of the lotuses have I described;
All this creation is within Pind,
The material universe.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.65:9

Each of these six centres has letters (phonetic symbols) written on them, the number of letters corresponding to the number of petals in each lotus or chakra. Thus, inscribed on *ganesha chakra* are four letters, six on *indri chakra*, and so on. The total number of letters on the six lotuses comes to forty-eight. When we add the four on the lotus corresponding to the inner instrument or mind, *antahkaran* (अन्तःकर्ण), the total comes to fifty-two. These are the fifty-two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, making a correspondence between the alphabet and the internal stages of the various energy forces of the creation, symbolically represented by the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. It is for this reason that the Sanskrit language is called *dev vaani* (देव वाणी), the language of the gods.

Now, the seat of the soul in the waking condition is behind the two eyes in the third eye focus, known as *tisra til* (तीसरा तिल) or *shiv netra* (शिव नेत्र), and called by some Muslim mystics *qalb-i muneeb* (قلب نیب). This centre is above the six centres of material creation, so the soul of a human being naturally resides above the powers of creation, sustenance and destruction, symbolically represented as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

The six centres of subtle matter contain only vestiges of spirituality and mostly material forces. Yogis go into these chakras by the method of pranayam, which will be discussed under the section on mystic practices. For real spirituality we have to ascend above the eyes into the next division of creation. We can do this directly from where we are at present, behind the two eyes, without going down into these six chakras.

b. Materio-spiritual creation

The materio-spiritual creation contains two chief planes, the first being Niranjana Desh.

(1) *Niranjana Desh* (निरंजन देश) or *Turiya Pad* (तुरिया पद): After crossing a starry sky, sun and moon, we reach this region, also

called the astral plane (सूक्ष्म जगत). There are three currents here – the left, the right and the middle, called *ida* (इडा), *pingala* (पिंगला) and *sushumna* (सुषुम्ना). The path to the higher planes lies in the *sushumna*, or *sushmana* as it is sometimes called.

सुषमन सेती ध्यान लगाओ ॥

Concentrate thy attention in *sushmana*.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.66:11

Sushumna has been called *shah rag* (شاہ رگ) by Muslim mystics.

اللہ شاہ رگ تھیں نزدیک

Through *shah rag* is God near.

BULLEH SHAH,

TRADITIONAL *KAFI*, *GAL RAULAA LOKAAN PAAYAA EE*

The nucleus of this stage is at the conjunction of these three ways, or streams, and that is the true Prayag (प्रयाग) or Triveni (त्रिवेणी), sacred places for Hindus.

ਇੜਾ ਪਿੰਗਲਾ ਅਉਰ ਸੁਖਮਨਾ ਤੀਨਿ ਬਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਈ ॥
ਬੇਣੀ ਸੰਗਮੁ ਤਹ ਪਿਰਾਗੁ ਮਨੁ ਮਜਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਤਿਥਾਈ ॥

Ida, pingala and sushmana,

At one place there do they meet.

Their confluence, O Beni, is the true Prayag,

And there doth the mind bathe.

O Saints, Niranjana – the Pure One – is there;

By Guru's grace the rare few realize this.

BENI, *ADI GRANTH*, P.974

तिरबेनी के संध समाओ। भोर उतर चल पारा है।

In Triveni, the confluence of the three,
Do thou merge thyself, and then go beyond.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHARDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.66:11

By bathing at this inner Triveni (त्रिवेणी) or Prayag (प्रयाग), the mind is purified. External waters clean only the body.

These three streams are called by the names Ganga or Ganges (गंगा), Yamuna (यमुना) and Saraswati (सरस्वती), and they meet again in the Parbrahm stage where the predominantly spiritual realms begin. Their conjunction there is also named Prayag, Triveni and Mansarovar (मानसरोवर) or Amritsar (अमृतसर), sea of nectar. That is the real *teerath* (तीरथ) or sacred pilgrimage place.

Niranjan Desh has three parts:

- Jhjhri Deep (झंझरी दीप)
- Shyam Kanj (श्याम कंज)
- Set Sunn (सेत सुन्न). *Set* (सेत) means 'white'.

There are twenty-two Sunns in all, and Set Sunn is the first or lowest, but this name is generally reserved for the Sunn in the Parbrahm stage.

As there is a thousand-petalled lotus in the Niranjan stage, it is also called Sahansdal Kamal (सहंस दल कैवल). *Sahans* (सहंस) means 'thousand', *dal* means 'petal' and *kamal* means 'lotus'. The affairs of the physical and astral planes are managed from here and these petals are mentioned by certain mystics as the thousand eyes and ears of God.

ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਨੈਨ ਨਨ ਨੈਨ ਹਰਿ ਭੋਰਿ ਕਉ
ਸਹਸ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਾਨ ਏਕ ਭੋਰੀ ॥

One thousand eyes hast thou,
And one thousand faces;
Still thou art one.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.13

In the Vedas, we have:

सहस्र शीर्षं पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ॥

One thousand heads hath he,
One thousand eyes, and one thousand feet.

RIG VEDA X:90:1

As this centre sustains the lower creation, it is also called the Shesh Nag (शेष नाग) or 'thousand-headed serpent', on whose head, according to Hindu mythology, the whole world rests.

The light of this place is like that of a flame, and therefore this manifestation of the Almighty is called Jyoti-Swarup Bhagwan (ज्योति स्वरूप भगवान्).

ਆਤਮ ਜੋਤਿ ਭਈ ਪਰਛਲਿਤ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਹਜ਼ੂਰਿ ॥

Then manifesteth the spiritual flame,
And the pure Lord is seen face to face.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1198

ਤਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਥਾਈ ॥

Flame, the essence of Niranjana, appeareth everywhere.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.599

ਗੁਰ ਸਾਖੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

By the grace of Guru is the flame manifested.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.13

ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈ ਘਟਿ ਦੀਪਕੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਤਾ ਹੇ ॥

Day and night shineth the pure flame,
And the Guru's devotee knoweth this inner lamp.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1032

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਓ ॥ ਮਨ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਹਿ ਦੀਪਕੁ ਜਲਿਓ ॥

Whosoever by God's grace findeth Satguru,
In the temple of his mind is the spiritual lamp lit.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.235

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਭਾਹਿ ਤਿਸੈ ਤੂ ਰਖੁ ॥ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਦੀਵਾ ਬਲੈ ਅਥਕੁ ॥ ...
ਐਸਾ ਦੀਵਾ ਬਾਲੇ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋ ਪਾਰੰਗਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥

Keep inner devotion for him;
Day and night burneth the eternal lamp...
Whosoever lighteth this lamp, O Nanak,
To a high place doth he go.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.878

ਦੀਪਕ ਦੇਖਾ ਗੈਬ ਕਾ ਬਿਨ ਬਾਤੀ ਬਿਨ ਤੇਲ ॥

Without wick and without oil
Doth the transcendent lamp burn.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P.112:64

Guru Gobind Singh says that unless one attains this stage of *jyoti*, he is not a true *khalsa* or pure disciple.

ਜਾਗਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜਪੈ ਨਿਸਬਾਸੁਰ ...
ਪੂਰਨ ਜੋਤਿ ਜਗੈ ਘਟ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਖਾਲਸ ਤਾਹਿ ਨਖਾਲਸ ਜਾਨੈ ॥

Then doth the *khalsa* become pure *khalsa*,
When inside him is lit the living flame.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *DASAM GRANTH*, P.712

Of this spiritual flame, Paltu Sahib similarly says that it cannot be seen without the help of the mystic adept.

उलटा कूवा गगन में, तिस में ज़रै चिराग ॥
तिस में ज़रै चिराग बिना रोगन बिन बाती ।
छः रितु बारह मास रहत जरतै दिन राती ॥
सतगुरु मिला जो होय ताहि की नजर में आवै ।
बिना सतगुरु कोउ होय नहीं वा को दरसावै ॥

In Gagan (the sky of the causal region)
Is an inverted well,
And in it burns a lamp.
In it the lamp burns without oil and without wick,
And keeps burning day and night,
For all the six seasons and the twelve months.
Whoever has found Satguru beholds that light;
For those who have no Satguru,
Invisible it remains.

PALTU, *PALTU SAHIB KI BANI*, VOL.1, KUNDLI 169

There are ten kinds of music here, beginning with the chirping of birds and small bells and going on to conch, flute, big bell, drums, thunder and other sounds which are described later under the mystic practice of *shughl-i naseera* (شغلِ نصیره). Yogis get absorbed in them at this stage. Lord Krishna's flute (بانسری) was this internal spiritual flute,

rather than an external physical one; the external flute is a symbol of the real inner one. The transcendent music that leads us up into the next region is that of bells and conches. This music goes on here perpetually and reverberates throughout the whole astral world.

ਘੰਟਾ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਸੁਨੀਐ ਚਹੁ ਭੁੰਟ ॥

...Whose bell in all the four corners is heard.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.393

The mystic Hafiz points to the ringing of this bell when he says:

کس ندانست که منزل گهبر معشوق کجا است این قدر هست که بانگ جر سے می آید

Where the home of the Beloved is,
No one doth know.
They know only this much –
That from it proceedeth the music of the bell.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ* P.382, 206:5

The Upanishads and Vedas also refer to this music:

आदौ जलधिजीमूतभेरीनिर्झरसंभवः ।
मध्ये मर्दलशब्दाभौ घण्टाकाहलजस्तथा ॥

First he will hear a sound like that
Of the waves of ocean, clouds,
Kettle drum, and cataracts.
At intervals he will hear the sound
Of the drum or *mardala*,
Bell and conch.

NAD BINDU UPANISHAD 34

Reference to this music of bell and conch is often met with in mystic writings. In the durbar of that Lord:

झुलवे चहुर मंध ँन गाने ॥

The *chauri* (ceremonial fly-whisk) is waving,
Conches resounding and clouds thundering.

BENI, ADI GRANTH, P.974

The headquarters of the astral plane is the Ishwar Pad (ईश्वर पद) of Hindus and the final stage, Alakh Niranjana (अलख निरंजन), of yogis. Socrates and Plato probably referred to this stage when they talked of their World of Ideas and said that this world was more real than the physical plane, and that the things of this material world of ours were copies of those ideas. Muslim mystics call it Alam-i Malakoot, or Koh-i Tur (کوه تور). The place where Prophet Moses saw the light of God is also inside on this plane, and many rishis, munis, yogis and other spiritual leaders stay here, captivated by the bewitching beauty and power of the transcendent flame.

For Shabd mystics, however, who start from above the eyes, this is the first stage. Their final stage is the fifth region, in the purely spiritual realms. Kabir Sahib asks us to listen to the music of bell and conch in the first stage, and then, passing through Bank Nal (बंक नाल), a sort of curved tunnel between the astral plane (सूक्ष्म जगत) and the causal plane (कारण लोक), to go up into the next stage.

घंटा संख सुनो धुन दोई । सहस कँवल दल जगमग होई ॥
ता मध करता निरखो सोई । बंकनाल धस पारा है ॥

Listen thou to the music both of bell and conch;
Wondrously shineth the thousand-petalled lotus.

In the midst behold thou the creator,
Then through Bank Nal do thou force thy way up.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 66:12

(2) *Brahm Lok* (ब्रह्म लोक) or *Om* (ओं): This region, also sometimes called *qalb-i saleeb* (قلب صليب), is the second stage, the causal region, and the top of the materio-spiritual creation. Passing through a very fine aperture, which Christ and other mystics call the eye of the needle, and crossing the siphon-shaped tunnel of Bank Nal, we enter this causal world. Here is a four-petalled lotus (चार दल कंकल) from where the rishis of old took the four *mahaavaak* (महावाक) or four 'great utterances,' and from where the Vedas originated.

Brahm is also called Om (ओम्), for the reverberation of the sound of *onkar* (ओंकार) coming out of the thunder of clouds is always heard here and it draws the soul up from Bank Nal (बंक नाल) towards its centre.

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਏਕੁ ਪੁਨਿ ਏਕੈ ਏਕੈ ਰਾਗੁ ਅਲਾਪੈ ॥

One is Onkar, one is his reverberation,
And one tune doth he produce.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P. 885

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਉਤਪਤਿ ॥ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ ਕੀਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਚਿਤਿ ॥
ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਸੈਲ ਜੁਗ ਭਏ ॥ ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਬੇਦ ਨਿਰਮਏ ॥

Onkar created god Brahma;
Onkar doth he adore.

* The four 'great utterances' are four precepts from the Upanishads that state that the Supreme God (Brahman) and self are identical: (1) "Consciousness is Brahman." (2) "I am Brahman." (3) "Thou art That." (4) "This self is Brahman."

Onkar created yugas (the cycles of time);
Onkar revealed the Vedas.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.929

Om contains the seed of all knowledge and karmas. The reserve store of our karmas, *sinchit* (संचित) karmas, is also here. The mountains Mer (मेर), Sumer (सुमेर) and Kailash (कैलाश) are in this vast region of Brahm.

The light of the causal region is like the reddish-golden light of the morning sun, but that sun is a thousand times brighter than our external sun.

ਏਕ ਕੋਸਰੇ ਸਿਧਿ ਕਰਤ ਲਾਲੁ ਤਬ ਚਤੁਰ ਪਾਤਰੇ ਆਇਓ ॥

Crossing one stage,
Reached I the four-petalled red Lord.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.624

The Vedas describe him as Hiranya Garbha (हिरण्य गर्भः), the Golden Egg. In the Upanishads this is mentioned as the Golden Sun.

हिरण्यये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम् ।
तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद्यदात्मविदो विदुः ॥

On a supreme disc set with gold
Is the immaculate Brahm, the light of all lights,
That the seeker after the spirit beholdeth.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD II:2:9

When the sun of Brahm dawns, light spreads all around and the darkness of ignorance is dissipated.

ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਆ ਸੂਰੁ ਨਿਸਿ ਮਿਟਿਆ ਅੰਧਿਆਰਾ ॥

Appareth the sun and vanisheth
The darkness of night.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1069

Come to this stage, says Rumi, if thou desirest to commune with me.

چوں شوی محرم کلماتم با تو لب تا پنی آفتاب نیم شب
بُزروان پاک اور اشراق نے در طلوعش روز و شب را فرق نے

When a confidant (of the divine secret)
Hast thou become,
Then shall I open my lips to thee
And thou shall behold the midnight sun.
Save pure souls none findeth access unto him;
In that dawn is no difference 'twixt night and day.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* IV:584-585

Talking of this stage, which is also called Trikuti (as explained later), Kabir Sahib says:

त्रिकुटी महल में बिद्या सारा, घनहर गरजें बजे नगारा ॥
लाल बरन सूरज उँजियारा, चतुर कँवल मँझार सब्द ओंकारा है ॥

In Trikuti palace is the essence of all learning;
Clouds thunder and drums roar.
Red-coloured is the light of the sun;
In the four-petalled lotus is the reverberation of Onkar.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P.66:15

The sky of this region is known as Gagan (गगन), in contradistinction to the firmament of the first region, which is termed Akash (आकाश). Nectar drops here from above, as from an inverted well; the devotee drinks this nectar and gets bliss.

गगन मँडल बिच उर्धमुख कुइया ॥ गुरुमुख साधू भर भर पीया ॥
निगुरे प्यास मरे बिन कीया । जा के हिये औंधियारा है ॥

In the realm of Gagan is an inverted well,
From which the devotee of the Guru
Drinketh nectar to his fill.
Who hath no Guru, dieth he of thirst
Without doing (the mystic practice),
For in his mind is darkness.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.66:14

Paltu Sahib also mentions the inverted well in Gagan:

उलटा कूवा गगन में ... ॥

In Gagan is an inverted well.

PALTU, *PALTU SAHIB KI BANI*, VOL.1, KUNDLI 169

The causal region, Trikuti, is the final stage of advanced yogis – *param yogis* (परम योगी) and *yogishwars* (योगीश्वर) – and is the location of the Gurpad (गुरुपद) of Shabd mystics (सन्त). Muslims call it Alam-i Jabaroot or Alam-i Lahoot.

This region is the origin of *manas* (मन) or mind. When in one's mystic ascent the devotee reaches this stage, his mind merges in Om; only the soul or spirit can cross over into the purely spiritual realms.

As a rule, creation, *utpatti* (उत्पत्ती) begins from Om, and Dissolution, *Pralaya* (प्रलय) ends here; the management of all

physical, astral and causal universes is in the hands of Brahm (or Om), and incarnations like Rama and Krishna descend into our world from here.

One who attains to the top of this stage and realizes Brahm experiences bliss and is freed from the pain and sorrow of this world.

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभोति कदाचन ॥

The knower of the bliss of Brahm feareth none.

UPANISHADS, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਬੇਦ ਨ ਜਾਨਹਿ ॥

Vedas know not the greatness of sadhs.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.272

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦ ॥
 ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਸਦਾ ਅਨੰਦ ॥ ...
 ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਹੋਇ ਅੰਚਿਤ ॥ ...
 ਨਾਨਕ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਆਪ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰ ॥

The knower of Brahm hath in his mind supreme bliss;
 In him doth bliss ever abide....

The knower of Brahm hath no fear....

O Nanak, the knower of Brahm is verily God himself.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.273

This stage is technically called Trikuti (त्रिकुटी), meaning 'triangular' or 'three mounts', not only because it has that shape, but also because it is the ultimate origin of the three gunas or qualities: *satogun* (सतो गुण), the quality of purity, goodness and harmony; *rajogun* (रजो गुण), the quality of passion, creativity and activity;

and *tamogun* (तमो गुण), the quality of darkness, heaviness and inertia. The three gunas are personified as the three gods Brahma (*rajogun*, the creator), Vishnu (*satogun*, the preserver) and Shiva (*tamogun*, the destroyer). We should aim at going beyond these three gunas into the spiritual sphere. That we can do only with the help and grace of a true Perfect Guru.

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸ਼ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਗੁਣਿ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਈ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਕੁਟੀ ਛੁਟੈ ਚਉਥੈ ਪਦਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥

The three deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva) –
The three qualities – are in delusion.
By the grace of Guru do thou go beyond Trikuti
And attach thyself to the fourth realm.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.909

Sat Lok, the purely spiritual plane, is referred to as the fourth realm or plane because it is beyond the three worlds of Brahm – the material, astral and causal. Again we have:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਤ੍ਰਿਕੁਟੀ ਛੁਟੈ ॥
ਚਉਥੈ ਪਦਿ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

By meeting Satguru shalt thou go beyond Trikuti
Into the fourth realm and find salvation.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.33

ਕਿਉ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਕੁਟੀ ਛੁਟਸੀ
ਸਹਜਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

How without Guru shalt thou go beyond Trikuti
And find the bliss of *sahaj*?

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.18

Sahaj (ਸਹਿਜ) is the state of beatitude experienced in the fourth realm.

ਤਿਹੁ ਗੁਣਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇ ॥ ...
ਚਉਥੇ ਪਦ ਮਹਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

In the three gunas (qualities) *sahaj* cannot be attained,
For in delusion are the three gunas....
In the fourth realm is *sahaj*,
And the devotee of the Guru alone attaineth it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.68

Thus, by devotion to the Perfect Guru one can go beyond Brahm into the next grand division of creation and find true bliss and beatitude.

c. *Causal-spiritual creation*

The causal-spiritual creation may be divided into two main regions: Parbrahm and Sohang.

(1) *Parbrahm* (ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ) or *Daswan Dwar* (ਦਸਵਾਂ ਦਵਾਰ): Called by Muslim mystics 'Alam-i Lahoot' (عالم لا هووت), this is next above Brahm or Om. To reach this transcendent region the soul has to put off all covers – physical, astral and causal. Freed from all delusion and ignorance, the soul shines in its own glory and attains a radiance equal to twelve suns.

ਦ੍ਵਾਦਸ ਭਾਨੁ ਹੰਸ ਭੰਜਿਆਰਾ ॥

The brightness of a hansa (swan)
Showeth the light of twelve suns.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.66:18

A lighted lamp if covered by several pieces of thick cloth gives us no light, and whatever room it may be taken into remains dark. Similarly our soul, enclosed in so many covers, gives us no light and we remain in ignorance and delusion. In Parbrahm all the covers are removed and then it is called a *hansa* (हंस), a swan or awakened soul. Only then can it behold the great Lord of that stage.

ਅਦਿਸਟੁ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ
ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਧੁ ਅਕਬੁ ਕਥਾਇਆ ਬਾ ॥

Invisible, inaccessible, and unutterable Parbrahm
Was with the help of mystics uttered and known.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1002

Since no trace of *maya* or matter is left here, Parbrahm is known as *Akshar Purush* (अक्षर पुरुष). *Akshar*, 'without *kshar*' (क्षर), means 'without *maya*', 'imperishable', but *akshar* also means letters of the alphabet.

ਬਾਵਨ ਅਛਰ ਲੋਕ ਤੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਇਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਏ ਅਖਰ ਖਿਰਿ ਜਾਹਿਗੇ ਓਇ ਅਖਰ ਇਨ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

Within the fifty-two letters are the three worlds
And everything; these letters shall decay,
But that *akshar* is not in these.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.340

Akshar Purush is beyond the three worlds, physical, astral and causal. In fact there are two parts of Parbrahm. The lower has a downward tendency; it creates Brahm or Om and through it the lower regions, while the upper leads higher up into the spiritual realms of *Sohang* and *Sat Lok*. The true and Perfect Guru teaches

his disciples to leave the lower and catch hold of the higher so that they may go further up into Sat Lok.

ਸੋਝ ਗੁਰੂ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਹਾਵੇ, ਦੋਝ ਅਖਰ ਕਾ ਭੇਦ ਬਤਾਵੇ ।
 ਏਕ ਛੁਡਾਵੇ ਏਕ ਮਿਲਾਵੇ, ਤੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰ ਕੋ ਜਾਵੇ ॥

That Guru is called perfect
 Who telleth thee the secret of two Akshars.
 One he maketh thee leave, one he uniteth thee with,
 Then dost thou, O friend, go to thy true home.

BHAI MADAN SINGH, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

That higher Akshar is altogether beyond the sphere of maya, and his place is called Sunn Mandal (ਸੁਨ ਸਣਡਲ) or 'empty realm' because all disturbance and agitation of the mind is calmed here for good.

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਨ ਸੁੰਨ ਮਸੁੰਨੈ ॥
 ਚਉਥੇ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਤਾ ਕਉ ਪਾਪੁ ਨ ਪੁੰਨੈ ॥

Emptiness is within, emptiness is without,
 Emptiness is in the three worlds.
 Who knoweth the fourth emptiness (Sunn),
 Beyond good and evil doth he go.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.943

The Parbrahm stage is predominantly spiritual, beyond good and evil, beyond morality and relativity. It is also known as Daswan Dwar (ਦਸਵਾਂ ਫ਼ਾਰ), the tenth door, and is beyond the nine doors of the lower creation up to Brahm or Om.

ਦਸਮ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਅਗਮ ਅਪਾਰਾ ਪਰਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਘਾਟੀ ॥

Inaccessible and infinite Daswan Dwar
Is the hill of the Supreme Being.

BENI, ADI GRANTH, P.974

ਦਸਵੈ ਦੁਆਰਿ ਰਹਤ ਕਰੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਇ ॥

Who maketh his home in Daswan Dwar
Knoweth all the three worlds.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.490

ਅਨਹਦ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਦਸਮ ਦੁਆਰਿ ਵਜਿਓ
ਤਹ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਚੁਆਇਆ ਥਾ ॥

In Daswan Dwar ringeth the transcendent Word
(Anahad Shabd);
Droppeth there the nectar of God's Name.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1002

As already stated, in the Parbrahm stage *ida*, *pingala* and *sushmana* meet again in a lake of nectar, Hawz-i Qawsar (ہَوْزِ قَوْسَر), which is mentioned by Indian mystics as Prayag (प्रयाग), Triveni (त्रिवेणी) or Mansarovar (मानसरोवर). By bathing in this lake the soul becomes immortal in that pure state.

आगे सेत सुन्न है भाई, मानसरोवर पैठि अन्हाई।
हंसन मिलि हंसा होइ जाई, मिलै जो अमी अहारा है ॥

Further on is Set Sunn, O brother;
Bathe thou in Mansarovar,
And when by mixing with hansas (pure swans)
Nectar shalt thou obtain, thou will become a hansa.

KABIR, KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI, VOL.1, P.66:17

In the line of the ten Gurus begun by Guru Nanak, that lake of nectar has been termed Amritsar (ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ). It is said that by having a dip in Amritsar, the dirty black crow is turned into a pure white hansa, and it is true. The crow feeds on filth and we in this world go after the filth of sensual desires and lower passions; we are crows. When we reach the stage of Parbrahm and bathe in this lake of nectar, our tendencies are changed. We no longer hanker after worldly things but yearn for the divine bliss of union with the absolute Lord. Thus, we are transformed into hansas, whose food is pearls. Our downward tendency is gone and we feed on the pearls of devotion and love for the Lord. That true Amritsar, which turns mortals into divine beings and brings transcendent knowledge and bliss, is within us all.

ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਰੁ ਸਾਚਾ ਮਨੁ ਪੀਵੈ ਭਾਇ ਸੁਭਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Within thy body is the true Amritsar,
And through love and devotion
Doth the mind drink of it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1046

Here, the transcendent music of the spiritual lute, *kingri* (ਕਿੰਗਰੀ) enchants the soul.

ਵਿਣੁ ਵਜਾਈ ਕਿੰਗੁਰੀ ਵਾਜੈ ਜੋਗੀ ਸਾ ਕਿੰਗੁਰੀ ਵਜਾਇ ॥

Unplayed the lute playeth on;
O yogi, play thou such a lute.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.909

ਐਸੀ ਕਿੰਗੁਰੀ ਵਜਾਇ ਜੋਗੀ ॥
ਜਿਤੁ ਕਿੰਗੁਰੀ ਅਨਹਦੁ ਵਾਜੈ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਰਹੈ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥

Play thou such a lute, O yogi,
As giveth thee Anahad Shabd
And createth in thee devotion for the Lord.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.908

किंगरी सारंग बजै सितारा, अच्छर ब्रह्म सुन्न दरबारा ।

The music of stringed instruments –
Kingri, sarangi and sitar –
Playeth in the Sunn durbar of Akshar Brahm.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.66:18

Akshar Brahm means Parbrahm, which is beyond the sphere of maya. The light of this plane is like the whiteness of the full moon, but twelve thousand times brighter and more glorious.

First we have to cross the stars at the threshold of the astral plane to reach the transcendent flame of Niranjana, then go beyond to the sun of Brahm or Om, and lastly transcend the sphere of Trikuti's sun to reach the moon of Parbrahm.

Just as one who reaches the stage of Jyoti or Niranjana is a true *khalsa* or *sikh*, similarly one who reaches the stage of Parbrahm is termed a true *sadh* in mystic phraseology.

साध सोई जिन यह गढ़ लीन्हा, नौ दरवाजे परगट चीन्हा ।
दसवाँ खोल जाय जिन दीन्हा, जहाँ कुफल रहा मारा है ॥

Sadh is he who conquereth this (Trikuti),
Goeth beyond the nine manifested doors to the tenth,
And openeth that which is locked.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.66:16

About such a *sadh*, Guru Arjun states:

ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲ ਹੋਤ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਮਲੁ ਸਗਲੀ ਖੋਤ ॥ ...
 ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਬੁਝੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਨੇਰਾ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਸਭੁ ਹੋਤ ਨਿਬੇਰਾ ॥ ...
 ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਕੇਵਲ ਪਾਰ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥ ...
 ਪਾਰ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਸਾਧ ਰਿਦ ਬਸੈ ॥ ...
 ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਉਪਮਾ ਤਿਹੁ ਗੁਣ ਤੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥ ...
 ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਧ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਭਾਈ ॥

By the company of sadhs (mystics)
 Radiance cometh to one's face;
 By the company of sadhs all dirt is removed....
 By the company of sadhs appeareth God near;
 By the company of sadhs all shackles are torn....
 In the company of sadhs is only Parbrahm....
 Abideth Parbrahm in the heart of sadhs....
 The praise of sadhs is beyond the three gunas....
 O Nanak, no difference existeth
 Between sadhs and the Lord.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.271-272

The Vedas were revealed by Brahma or Om, but sadhs go higher, up to Parbrahm; therefore, the Vedas cannot know the true worth of sadhs.

ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਬੇਦੁ ਨ ਜਾਨਹਿ ॥

Vedas know not the greatness of sadhs.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.272

(2) *Sohang*: The next region above Parbrahm is Sohng (ਸੋਹੰ) or Bhanwar Gupha (ਭੰਕਰ ਗੁਫਾ). We reach this region after crossing, with the help of the mystic adept, a vast region of utter darkness called Maha Sunn (ਮਹਾ ਸੁਨ), Timir Khand (ਤਿਮਿਰ ਖਾਣਡ), Parda-i

Zulmat (ظلمت) or Alam-i Hahoot (عالمِ ہاوت). Beyond maya, but different even from Parbrahm or Akshar, Maha Sunn is also called Niakshar (निःअक्षर), 'beyond the imperishable'.

Sohang means 'what thou art, the same am I', which is equivalent to the Sufi term 'Anahu' (أنه).

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਨ ਉਪਜੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਸੋਹ ਆਪੁ ਪਛਾਣੀਐ ਸਬਦਿ ਭੇਦਿ ਪਤੀਆਇ ॥

Without Guru love is not kindled,
And the dirt of egoism doth not go;
By Sohng know thou thyself
Through the secret of Shabd.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.60

This Sohng, which is a predominantly spiritual region, should not be confused with *swaas sohng* (स्वास सोहं), a mystic practice in which the word *sohng* is repeated with the inhaling and exhaling of breath at the heart centre, one of the focuses of subtle matter within the material creation. Many mystics confine themselves to lower centres within the sphere of maya or *gyoti* and do not seek the real Sohng, which is high up in the spiritual realms.

ਤਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈ ਸੋਹੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ਜੀਉ ॥

All over prevaieth the essence of Niranjn and Jyoti;
The secret of Sohng none doth know.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.599

Here is found a very fine spiritual swing on which souls move to and fro, and the place is termed Bhanwar Gupha (भंवर गुफा) or Alam-i Hootal-Hoot (عالمِ هوتال-هوت).

भँवरगुफा का फाटक तोड़ा। शीश महल सतगुरु दिखलाई ॥

By breaking open the gate of Bhanwar Gupha,
Satguru showeth the crystal palace.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 9:9:15

When we cross this region of Sohang or Bhanwar Gupha, we reach the crystal palace of Sach Khand, or Sat Lok. In Sohang we have the music of the spiritual murli (मुरली) or *banasri* (बंसरी), the flute.

मुरलिया बाज रही, कोई सुने संत धर ध्यान।
सो मुरली गुर मोहिं सुनाई, लगे प्रेम के बान ॥

Cometh the music of the flute;
In his meditation some mystic alone listeneth to it.
This flute hath my Guru enabled me to hear,
And by darts of the Lord's love is my heart pierced.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 35:28

Rumi begins his Masnavi from this stage:

بشنواز نے پھول حکایت می کند وز جدائی ہاشکایت می کند
کز نیستایں تا مرا بریدہ اند از نفیرم مردوزن نالیدہ اند

Oh, listen to the story the flute narrateth;
Of separation doth it complain.
Ever since from the reeds I was cut off,
Men and women have wailed
Because of my lament.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:1-2

Since the soul was separated from its home in Sach Khand, it has had no peace or calm; the flute sings in plaintive notes of this separation. Kabir Sahib refers to this stage in these words:

दो पर्वत के संध निहारो, भंवर गुफा तें संत पुकारो ।
हंसा करते केल अपारो, तहाँ गुरन दर्बारा है ॥
सहस अठासी दीप रचाये, हीरे पन्ने महल जड़ाये ।
मुरली बजत अखंड सदाये, तहाँ सोहं झनकारा है ॥

Of two mountains see thou the conjunction;
From Bhanwar Gupha call thou for saints;
Hansas enjoy their blissful sports;
There is the durbar of Guru.
Eighty-eight thousand vast spheres hath he created,
All furnished with palaces
Set with diamonds and rubies;
Ever goeth on the unbroken music of the flute;
There is the resounding of *sohang*.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 66-67

d. The purely spiritual creation

Finally, beyond Sohang lies the plane of Sat Lok, with the first stage also called Sat Lok, and the three stages above it.

(1) *Sat Lok* (सत्त लोक) or *Sach Khand* (सच खण्ड): As soon as we cross the boundary of Sohang, we land in Sat Lok, which is our true home. A volume of fragrance of wonderful sweetness greets us at the portal of this vast transcendent realm of concentrated spirituality.

सोहं हृद तजी जब भाई, सत्तलोक की हृद पुनि आई ।
उठत सुगंध महा अधिकाई, जा का वार न पारा है ॥

Sohang's limits when leavest thou, O brother,
 Sat Lok's boundary dost thou reach.
 Riseth there sweet fragrance,
 Wondrous, infinite, eternal.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHARDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.67:24

Sat Lok is also termed Sach Khand (सच खण्ड) and Sufis name it Maqam-i Haq (مقامِ حق). Both terms mean Realm of Truth. The Absolute Lord here is known as Sat Nam (ਸੱਤ ਨਾਮ), Sat Purush (सत्त पुरुष), Nirankar (ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ) or Haq (حق).

ਸਚ ਖੰਡਿ ਵਸੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ॥

In Sach Khand liveth Nirankar.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.8

As already mentioned, Pralaya (प्रलय) or ordinary Dissolution goes up to Brahm or Om, but Maha Pralaya (महा प्रलय) or Grand Dissolution goes up to Sohang. Sat Lok is beyond both Pralaya and Maha Pralaya; it never falls or is destroyed; it is the permanent and true home of the soul, everlasting and eternal. Therefore, our goal or ideal should not be below Sat Lok.

In the beginning, the soul descended from this stage. When it returns here, it attains the radiance of sixteen suns. Only then can it behold the Supreme Being, Sat Nam, whose one hair is as bright and lustrous as millions of suns and moons put together.

ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਹਜ ਸੂਖ ਮਨਿ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਕੋਟਿ ਸੂਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਪਰਗਾਸ ॥

Into the mind came the peace and bliss of *sahaj*,
 And shone millions of suns, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.717

ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਤ ਕੋਟਿ ਸੂਰ ਉਜਾਰਾ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਭਰਮੁ ਅੰਧੇਰਾ ॥

By reciting Nam shineth the light of millions of suns
And vanisheth the gloom of delusion.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.700

Reciting Nam, as explained fully further on, means doing the mystic practice of Surat Shabd Yoga.

The light of this plane, which drives away all delusion and darkness, is thus so tremendously great and dazzling that it leaves all description behind. By attaining the consciousness of this high stage, one goes beyond all dissolution and decay, above all ignorance and imperfection, now and forever, and finds eternal rest and everlasting beatitude.

ਕੋਟਿਨ ਭਾਨੁ ਤਦਯ ਜੋ ਹੋਏ, ਏਥੇ ਹੀ ਪੁਨਿ ਚੰਦ੍ਰ ਲਖੋਏ ।
ਪੁਰੁਸ਼ ਰੋਸ ਸਮ ਏਕ ਨ ਹੋਏ, ਏਸਾ ਪੁਰੁਸ਼ ਦੀਦਾਰਾ ਹੈ ॥

If millions of suns rise,
And as many moons come out,
The brightness of one hair of that Being
They cannot equal.
Such is the lustre of the Lord.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.67:26

In this realm, the transcendent music likened to the spiritual veena (*beena, ben*) (ਬੀਨਾ), a stringed instrument, plays forever.

ਹਰਿ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਮਨੁ ਲੀਨਾ ॥ ਨਿਤ ਬਾਜੇ ਅਨਹਤ ਬੀਨਾ ॥

Loving devotion to God hath pierced my heart,
And ever playeth the unstruck veena.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.622

ਅਨਹਦ ਬੇਨੁ ਕਜਾਕਤਗੋ ॥ ਕੈਰਾਗੀ ਰਾਸਹਿ ਗਾਕਤਗੋ ॥

A transcendent veena shall I play, O devotee;
Praise of the Lord shall I sing.

NAMDEV, ADI GRANTH, P.972-973

ਸਬਦੁ ਰਸਾਲੁ ਰਸਨ ਰਸਿ ਰਸਨਾ ਬੇਣੁ ਰਸਾਲੁ ਵਜਾਇਆ ॥

Sweet Shabd, the melody of which
The tongue cannot utter –
Such a veena have I played.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1039

ਰਹੰਤ ਜਨਮੰ ਹਰਿ ਦਰਸ ਲੀਣਾ ॥ ਬਾਜੰਤ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਬਦ ਬੀਣਾ ॥

Day and night devoted to the feet of the Guru
Doth he remain,
And music of the veena doth he hear, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1355

ਸਤਪੁਰੁਖ ਚੌਥੇ ਪਦ ਕਾਸਾ । ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਕਹਾ ਸਦਾ ਕੀਲਾਸਾ ॥
ਸੋ ਘਰ ਦਰਸਾਯਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਪ੍ਰੇ। ਬੀਨ ਕਯੇ ਜਹੂੰ ਅਚਰਜ ਤ੍ਰੇ ॥

In that fourth realm resideth Sat Purush,
And in that bliss doth the saint ever abide.
That home was shown to me by the Perfect Guru;
Wondrously sweet is the music of the veena there.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND,
MANGLACHARAN, CHAUPAI 2

ਥੋਡਥ ਭਾਨੁ ਹੰਸ ਕੋ ਰੂਪਾ, ਬੀਨਾ ਸਤ ਧੁਨ ਕਯੈ ਅਨੂਪਾ ।
ਹੰਸਾ ਕਰਤ ਚੰਕਰ ਸਿਰ ਭੂਪਾ, ਸਤ ਪੁਰੁਖ ਦਰਬਾਰਾ ਹੈ ॥

Of sixteen suns is the radiance
Of the hansas (swan-souls);
A wondrous veena soundeth the music of Truth;
Over the head of the Lord,
Swans wave the *chauri* (ceremonial fly-whisk);
This is the durbar of Sat Purush.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.67:25

The music of that transcendent sound is most charming and captivating, most enchanting and elevating. One who hears it is transported to the divine illumination of transcendent truth and attains oneness with the absolute Lord. It was at this stage that Mansur cried out 'Ana al-Haq' (انا الحق), or 'I am God, I am Truth'. He had merged his individuality in the supreme reality of Haq, Truth (حق) or Sat Purush. He was one with the Most High, but the people of his time knew it not, poor creatures! They put him to death.

چوں قلم در دستِ غدارے بود لا جرم منصور بردارے بود

When the pen lieth in the hand of an impostor,
Of necessity doth Mansur die on the gallows.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:1398

ہر کرازوے نزدانا الحق سر او بود از جماعتِ کفار

Whosoever uttereth not 'I am God',
Belongeth he to the tribe of unbelievers.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

In all ages, mystics of high planes have been persecuted. Instead of deriving benefit from their transcendent spirituality, people foolishly engage themselves in opposing them. These unfortunate people remain ignorant, but afterwards perhaps they repent when

it is too late. During the time of Guru Nanak, for instance, very few people recognized him as a great mystic, but now millions worship him. But that cannot open our inner eyes or give us mystic insight or take us up into high spiritual planes. For that purpose we need a perfect mystic adept living now in flesh and blood.

Let us not fall into such an error and waste our lives; let us not disregard great mystics of today; let us recognize them and give them our devotion now, so that they may take us out of the delusion of maya and land us in our true home of spiritual transcendence. Most fortunate indeed are those who have been accepted by a living mystic of the Sat Lok plane, for they shall also go there with him.

Included in the plane of Sat Lok are three more stages:

(2) *Alakh Lok, 'the invisible realm'* (अलख लोक): This is the stage of Alakh Purush (अकाल पुरुष) where the brightness of one of his hairs exceeds that of billions of suns and moons.

आगे अलख लोक है भाई, अलख पुरुष की तहाँ ठकुराई ।
अरबन सूर रोम सम नाही, ऐसा अलख निहारा है ॥

Next is Alakh Lok, O brother –
Ruleth there the lord Alakh Purush.
Billions of suns equal not one hair of his.
Such Alakh have I seen.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 67:27

आगे अलख पुरुष दरबारा । देखा जाय सुरत से सारा ॥

Beyond is the durbar of Alakh Purush,
Which in real essence can be seen
By the perfected soul alone.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*,
MANGLACHARAN, CHAUPAI 4

Above it is Agam Lok.

(3) *Agam Lok, 'the realm beyond reach' (अगम लोक)*: This is the stage of Agam Purush (अगम पुरुष), where the brightness of one of his hairs excels that of trillions of suns and moons.

ता पर अगम महल इक साजा, अगम पुरुष ताहि को राजा ॥
खरबन सूर रोम इक लाजा, ऐसा अगम अपारा है ॥

Above this is created one Agam palace;
Agam Purush is the king there.
Trillions of suns are shamed
By the brilliance of one hair of his,
Such is the limitless Agam.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 67:28

तिस पर अगम लोक इक न्यारा। संत सुख कोइ करत विहारा ॥

Above that is Agam Lok, a marvellous place,
Where the soul of a rare saint findeth access.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*,
MANGLACHARAN, CHAUPAI 5

Above this is Anami.

(4) *Anami, 'the nameless' (अनामी) or Akah, 'the unutterable' (अकह)*: This is the very last and final stage. Here the brightness is so tremendously great that it leaves all description behind.

ता पर अकह लोक है भाई, पुरुष अनामी तहाँ रहाई।
जो पहुँचा जानेगा वाही, कहन सुनन तें न्यारा है ॥

Above that is Akah Lok, O brother;
Anami Purush resideth there.

Who reacheth there, he alone shall know;
For beyond all words and description is he.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 67:29

Guru Nanak Sahib also says:

ਸਤਿ ਲੋਕ ਕੇ ਊਪਰ ਧਾਵੇ। ਅਲਖ ਅਗਮ ਕੀ ਤਬ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਵੇ ॥
ਤਾ ਕੇ ਊਪਰ ਸੰਤਨ ਧਾਮ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਕੀਆ ਬਿਸਰਾਮ ॥

Run thou above Sat Lok,
Then shalt thou know Alakh and Agam.
Above that is the realm of saints,
There doth this slave Nanak take rest.

GURU NANAK, *JANAM SAKHI*, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Anami means nameless, and different mystics have denoted this ultimate stage by different terms. Kabir Sahib calls it Anami and Akah (unutterable); Soami Ji calls it Soami (Swami).

ਸਕ ਕੀ ਆਦਿ ਕਹੂੰ ਅਬ ਸ੍ਵਾਮੀ ॥

Now talk I of Soami, the origin of all.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 23:1:28

Guru Arjun Sahib may also be referring to this nameless stage when he says:

ਊਚ ਅਪਾਰ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥

High, boundless, limitless Swami.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P. 802

ਬੇਸੁਮਾਰ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥

Infinite, eternal Swami.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.618

Guru Nanak Sahib names it Nirala, 'wonderful'.

ਤੂੰ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਾਲਾ ॥
ਤੂੰ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਅਲੇਖ ਅਗੰਮ ਨਿਰਾਲਾ ॥

Akal Purush art thou; Kal is not on thy head;
Thou art Alakh Purush, Agam Purush,
And Nirala Purush.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1038

Soami Ji calls it Radha Soami (*soami*, 'Lord', of *radha*, 'the soul').

तहाँ से दरसे अटल अटारी। अद्भुत राधास्वामी महल सँवारी ॥
सुरत हुई अति कर मगनानी। पुरुष अनामी जाय समानी ॥

From there is visible the Eternal Tower –
Wondrous indeed is the palace of Radha Soami;
Supremely enchanted, the soul mergeth
In that Anami Purush.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*,
MANGLACHARAN, CHAUPAI 6-7

As all these four stages from Sat Lok to Anami are beyond Dissolution and consist of the ultimate essence of pure spirituality, we may look upon them as merely four subclasses in the same grand plane – the plane of the transcendent absolute – which is the very final truth of existence and the eternal essence of being.

But they are beyond all words and description; no imagination or thought can ever reach them. Even the soul or spirit finds

access here only after a thorough training and purging in the lower regions. It is at this stage that all mystery is solved and all questions answered. Neither is there worry, nor want, nor trouble, nor imperfection.

It is in fact wrong even to talk of it, for it is beyond all relativity and duality. Suffice it to say that this is the very last plane of creation and the highest stage of consciousness and realization, where one becomes identical with the ultimate transcendent Absolute. In fact, we can hardly call it a stage; it is the infinite and eternal ocean of reality and spirituality.

4 Concluding

Sometimes people question how we know of the existence of these stages. The answer is: by mystic transport and inner transcendent realization. We have already discussed what mystic transport and insight are, and we will discuss this further in the next part.

We can know of the existence of these mystic planes, as well as the reach or internal access of a teacher, in two ways:

- Firstly, by going inside and up into subtle planes ourselves, as soul, through mystic practices and spiritual concentration, seeing things with our own inner eyes and thus obtaining firsthand transcendent knowledge. But this method is open only to great mystics.
- Secondly, by reading the writings of mystics of the past and by becoming familiar with their message and teachings through a careful and comparative study of their books. This method is open to all, but we must remember that mystic books, since they are written in technical phraseology, are difficult, nay, practically impossible to understand without the help of a true contemporary mystic adept.

By both of these methods we come to know the truth of what is given above. However, the wonder is that many people believe in the existence of Niranjana Desh and some even in Brahm or Om, but find it hard to believe in the existence of higher spiritual planes. They have not seen Niranjana or Brahm, but believe in them because these are mentioned in the Vedas and other religious books. By the same argument they should believe in Sat Lok and other spiritual stages because they have been mentioned by so many great mystics.

Each mystic mentions up to the stage that he himself has reached, and thus those who went up to the highest plane of Anami mention it in their writings. We have no reason to disbelieve them. We should not let our prejudice and old bias stand in our way and keep us from the truth.

CHAPTER TWO

Kinds, Stages and Forms of Mystic Practice

1 Kinds of mystic practices: varnatmak and dhunatmak

There are several kinds of mystic practice. In the first place we may divide them into two main classes, varnatmak and dhunatmak.

a. Varnatmak (वर्णात्मक)

Varnatmak, literally 'relating to descriptive words', is a meditation practice for concentrating one's attention within oneself, in which some holy name is repeated with the tongue or in the mind. It has four forms:

(1) *Baikhri (बैखरी)*: The holy name is uttered and repeated with the tongue.

(2) *Madhyama (मध्यमा)*: The holy name is repeated in the mind at the *kanth chakra* (कंठ चक्र), the throat centre.

(3) *Pashyanti (पश्यन्ती)*: The holy name is repeated in the mind at the *hridaya chakra* (हृदय चक्र), the heart centre.

(4) *Para* (परा): Yogis repeat some holy name in the mind in a subtle form at the *naabhi chakra* (नाभी चक्र), the navel centre.

All the four kinds of varnatmak practice deal with the repetition of words which can be written, read and spoken. There is no doubt that by these practices our heart and mind become pure, we attain some supernatural and miraculous power, and experience some sort of internal peace and happiness. However, as all these four stages are below the third eye focus, which is the seat of the soul in the waking condition, varnatmak practice does not yield us continuous and lasting bliss. That can be achieved only by the second kind of mystic practice, dhunatmak.

b. Dhunatmak (धुन्यात्मक)

Dhunatmak, literally 'relating to sound', begins from the astral plane, above the third eye focus. Its formula is not any word or holy name, but a spiritual transcendent current which emanates from God and permeates all creation. It cannot be written, read or spoken.

When the soul is concentrated in the third eye and turned towards the Dhun, this spiritual current is drawn upwards into higher planes as an iron needle is attracted by a magnet. In essence, this transcendent current is the same as the Supreme Being and it eventually leads the soul into the highest spiritual plane of absolute reality.

But before we go into further details of this mystic practice, we should examine other practices as well.

There are a number of mystic practices, giving rise to as many mystic schools. In mysticism the effectiveness of a practice depends on the inner reach and power of the living adept; it is the height of spiritual flight of the presiding Master that determines what sort of school his will be.

In inner enlightenment various mystic methods have different rates of progress; the speed of spiritual ascent or flight of the soul

is not the same in all. Just as a horse-drawn tonga moves faster than a bullock cart, but a car is faster still and an aeroplane is the fastest, similarly the process of spiritual awakening and mystic ascent in some practices is slow, in others it is less slow, and in still others it is fast.

Moreover, these practices lead us to different spiritual stages as their final goal; the reach of each is different. A bullock cart cannot cross high and steep mountains, nor can a tonga or a car take us over water. A ship carries us safely across the sea, but it cannot come on land or fly in the air. Only an aeroplane may take us to any part of the globe. Similarly, various mystic practices come to a dead stop at different spiritual planes, for they are not subtle enough to go further up. All this, however, shall be seen as we come to each mystic practice. We will take only the important ones, more or less in order of their reach and efficacy.

2 Four stages of human spiritual development

In the spiritual development of human beings, the following four stages have been recognized by great reformers:

- *Shari'a* (شریعت), rules for the external mode of religious life.
- *Tariqa* (طریقت), 'way, method'; a code of higher spiritual morality and conduct.
- *Ma'rifa* (معرفت), 'knowledge, enlightenment'; nearness to and communion with the Lord.
- *Haqiqa* (حقیقت), 'path of truth'; merging in truth and full realization of God.

Most religions remain confined, at least in practice, to the first of these, *shari'a*, but some go up to the second, *tariqa*. The last two stages, *ma'rifa* and *haqiqa*, are reserved for mystic schools, inasmuch as it is through mystic practices and inner enlightenment alone that we can have true revelation and spiritual realization.

a. *Shari'a* (شریعت)

Shari'a is the first rung of the ladder. Of the religious people, most people remain content with *shari'a*; that is, they stick to external rites and ceremonies and the special ritual of their sect or creed, which includes keeping of fasts, going on pilgrimages, offering prayers in a set way and giving things and money in charity. They read and recite the sacred book of their religion and do not feel the need of a living teacher who may awaken their inner transcendent faculty of transport.

b. *Tariqa* (طریقت)

Tariqa is the next step towards fuller growth of the spiritual side of human beings. Those whom *shari'a* alone cannot satisfy and who are interested in the esoteric teachings of religion come up to this second stage. For such persons a living guide is necessary. Among the Muslims there are four chief families (خانداں) or schools practising *tariqa*:

- *Naqshbandi* (نقشبندی)
- *Qadri* (قادری)
- *Sobrawardi* (سہروردی)
- *Chishti* (چشتی)

These schools use different methods of contemplation and repetition to concentrate the attention. An explanation of the practices associated with these schools is found in the next chapter.

c. *Ma'rifa* (عرفت)

Ma'rifa, spiritual knowing, is the next stage in the inner spiritual awakening of a human being; it leads the devotee inwards and upwards, beyond the third eye focus. The disciple is then known as *arif* (عارف) – one who has understood spirituality and knows the nature and being of God.

d. Haqiqa (حقیقت)

Haqiqa, the way of truth, is the last stage, in which the devotee goes further up and enters pure spirituality and attains complete union with the Supreme Being.

People in these last two stages, *ma'rifa* and *haqiqa*, are not bound by the tenets of *shari'a*. They transcend all such limitations. They are true and great mystics.

The practices by which they attain the highest spiritual planes will be described in their respective sections further on.

3 Four forms of practices

Regarding the methods of securing access into subtle spheres, either during one's lifetime or after death, four forms of practices have been mentioned in religious books.

a. Dasti (دستی)

Dasti, 'with the hands', such as telling beads, as well as carrying out manual work while remembering God, doing one's duty and performing good and useful actions. This method is made use of in mystic practices like karma yoga, to be described later.

b. Lisaani (لسانی)

Lisaani is 'with the tongue', such as reading and recitation of passages from sacred books, offering of prayers, repetition of holy names, uttering good words and preaching. This method is used in repetition, *jaap* (जाप), *simran* (सिमरन) or *ziker* (زیکر); and recitation, *paath* (पाठ).

c. Sama (سماع)

Sama is 'with the ears', such as listening externally to good sayings, hymns and revealed writings; also listening internally to the inner sounds and music of subtle planes. This method, in the

latter sense, is used in mystic practices such as Shughl-i Naseera (شغلِ نصیره) and Shughl-i Sawt-i Sarmadi (شغلِ صوتِ سرمدی) or Surat Shabd Yoga (सुरत शब्द योग). These practices consist of listening to the inner sound current or Anahad Shabd (अनहद शब्द). They will be described at length later on.

d. Basri (بصری) or nazri (نظری)

Basri is done 'with the eyes', for example gazing on an external object and fixing the sight on one point for a long time, gradually awakening the internal power of vision, called in Hindi *nirat* (निरत). This method is used in practices such as *shughl-i aafaaabi* (شغلِ آفتابی), *shughl-i aa'ina* (شغلِ آئینه) and *shughl-i neemkhwaabi* (شغلِ نیم خوابی) described below.

Help is taken from this method also in mystic practices such as the highest kind of *mudra* (मुद्रा) in the causal plane, where attention is focused on inner light, and in Surat Shabd Yoga (सुरत शब्द योग), where the soul moves upwards by means of *nirat* or the inner seeing faculty to purely spiritual realms. These higher kinds of practices will be discussed later on.

CHAPTER THREE

Mystic Systems of Practice

1 Tasawwur (تصور)

The four main Sufi schools which teach the way of *tariqa* – Naqshbandi, Qadri, Sohrawardi and Chishti – prescribe certain higher codes of ethics and mystic practices. *Tasawwur* (تصور), a type of concentration, is used by some of the members of these mystic brotherhoods. In the brotherhood of the Silsila-i Naqshbandiya (فرقة نقشبندیہ), a sort of coloured map of some internal stage is set for concentration before the eyes, and *tasawwur*, or the conception of it, is held fast in the mind.

As even mere concentration yields some satisfaction and peace of mind and might lead to the attainment of supernatural powers, this practice enjoys some prestige; but if the disciple's practice is nothing more than ritual concentration of a map or chart, the aspirant's soul will not be able to rise up into any high plane, nor will his labour bear much fruit in the way of spiritual realization.

In the beginning, these schools recommend a rosary (تسبیح) for aid in concentration; but later on it is sometimes dispensed with. All four schools have contemporary spiritual Masters of their own who are called Khalifas (خليفة) or Regents, who instruct and direct their disciples in their practices and daily life. It is said that all these Khalifas trace their descent from the holy Prophet.

Although at the stage of *tariqa* the outlook on life of the followers is broadened and their mental horizon and sympathies are widened so that they have greater tolerance for the views and practices of other cults and creeds, yet they do not altogether go out of the bonds of *shari'a*, dedication to the law of conduct.

2 Zikr-i qalb (ذکر قلب)

In advanced stages, *tariqa* lays great emphasis on the development of the heart, *qalb* (قلب), a word that has a very comprehensive meaning, beginning with the palpitating physical organ in the chest but also denoting the subtle heart centre in the physical body and material creation, called *qalb-i sanobari* (قلب صوباری), and going on to include the spiritual heart or third eye focus behind the two eyes, known in Persian as *nuqta-i suwaida* (نقطه سويدا), *mibraab* (محراب) or *qalb-i muneeb* (قلب منیب). In the highest kinds of mystic practice, which are only concerned with *ma'rifa* (knowledge, enlightenment) and *haqiqa* (truth), the place of *qalb* or the heart is considered to be in Alam-i Lahoot – that is, in Trikuti, Brahm or Om, the top of the materio-spiritual creation, from where the soul is said to be absorbed into the Beyond.

हीया त्रिकुटी माहिं ॥

The heart is in Trikuti.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*, P.33, DOHA 2

This 'heart in Trikuti' is named by Persian mystics *qalb-i saleeb* (قلب صلیب).

Zikr-i qalb, also called *shughl-i ism-i zaat* (شغل اسم ذات), is a mystic practice in which, by repetition of a holy name, the devotee concentrates his attention on the heart – whether the 'heart in Trikuti' or the heart focus, *qalb-i sanobari*, which in Hindi is called

bridaya chakra (हृदय चक्र), the heart centre, one of the six centres of subtle matter below the eyes.

Zikr means 'repetition', and *qalb* means 'heart'; the practice of *zikr-i qalb* at the heart centre or eye centre is very common among a certain class of Muslim dervishes* and Sufis and, if followed patiently and persistently, leads to the attainment of supernatural powers and some degree of inner peace and happiness. It keeps the consciousness of the devotee confined, however, to centres within the material creation.

There is a method prevalent among some of these schools in which the teacher strikes the hearts of his pupils with his own ideas and feelings (دل پر ضرب لگاتا); that is, he gives certain impulses to the hearts of his disciples by moving his head right and left successively while the holy name, *ism-i zaat* (اسم ذات), is repeated. The object is to impress the heart through these muscular movements with the higher spirituality of the teacher. This practice, however, unless the teacher has connected the disciple to the eternal Name, the true *ism-i zaat* or Essence-Name, does not have much mystic value.

3 **Swaas sohang** (स्वास सोहं) or **paas-i anfaas** (پاس انفاس)

This is a practice in which the devotee repeats some holy name such as *sohang* (सोहं) with the inhaling and exhaling of the breath, *swaas*. One syllable, 'so' (सो), is uttered as the breath is being taken in, and the other, 'hang' (हं), when the breath is being exhaled. The mouth is kept closed, and breathing is done only through the nose. The eyes are also kept closed so that external views may not distract one's attention from internal concentration.

By this method the repetition gradually becomes automatic, so to speak; inner concentration is also attained, and a sort of

* A mystic of the Sufi tradition, often one who has taken vows of poverty and austerity.

internal peace is experienced, which some mistake for spiritual bliss but which in reality is only the happiness of concentration. Moreover, this method shares the limitations of all practices of repetition of words, and therefore does not take us above the six centres of the material creation.

4 Zikr-i fahmeeda (ذکر فہمیدہ)

This is a practice in which, by repetition of a holy name, we concentrate our attention on the tip or root of the nose and try to go inside, into the subtle plane behind the eyes, but like other practices of repetition of words it can take us no further.

There are several other practices of repetition of names or formulae, such as *zikr-i aayat al-kursi* (ذکر آیت الکرسی), *zikr-i haddaavi* (ذکر حدادی), *zikr-i karahaidri* (ذکر کاراحیدری), *zikr-i mukaashafah* (ذکر مکاشفہ) and *zikr-i fana-o baqa* (ذکر فنا و بقا), all of which aim at internal concentration.

These practices of *zikr* (ذکر), which in Hindi is called *simran* (सिमरन), or repetition of holy names, lead the practitioner to experience a sort of mystic rapture technically known as *hal* (حال). This opens up mysteries hidden to the ordinary person and reveals visions of heavenly or astral things which the intellect cannot know.

Thus, although we get a taste of that true happiness of which the senses are as yet unaware, as all such practices keep us at or below the third eye focus, and as the method here is purely *varnatmak*, the internal happiness experienced in these is neither deep nor constant. It comes like the flashes of lightning between indifferent moments. These practices are our bullock carts; they remain within this creation of subtle matter and do not take us into materio-spiritual or purely spiritual realms.

Moreover, if a person is sitting on the sixth storey of a many-storeyed house and wants to go further up, he need not first come

down to begin his ascent all over again; he can go directly up. If we are sitting in the middle of a high mountain, we need not come down to the foot to begin climbing up. We can save much labour by beginning to ascend directly from the place where we are.

Now, in the waking condition the soul is already in the third eye focus, which is at the top of the six centres of subtle matter, the *khat chakras* (षट् चक्र). The various methods of repeating holy names – *simran* (सिमरन) or *zikr* (زکری) – take us only to one of these six centres. However, there is no need of going down into those lower centres when, from our present position, we can go up directly into materio-spiritual regions and then beyond into spiritual realms. Hence, the practice of repetition of a holy name is not the final method.

Although such a repetition does not transport the soul into any high plane, yet for the purification of the heart and the collection of the mind as a first step towards mystic realization, it is not only extremely useful but indeed indispensable. Concentration is essential in all mysticism, and repetition of a holy name at the third eye focus is the easiest and perhaps the best way of doing this. Thus, although a good starting point, it must not be looked upon as the real mystic practice or usurp its place.

5 *Shughl-i aaftaabi* (شغل آفتابی)

This is a practice in which the sight is focused on the sun and gradually trained to gaze on it continuously for a long time. This leads to the concentration of the current of consciousness in the eyes and helps to awaken the inner power of spiritual vision or *nirat* (निरत). This practice is generally started in winter at the time of sunrise and only light food, such as rice and milk, is taken.

This method may bring some supernatural power or *siddhi* (सिद्धि) to the devotee, but it keeps the attention in or behind the eyes, below the third eye focus.

6 Shughl-i aa'ina (شغل آئینه)

This is a practice in which a looking glass is placed in front of oneself and the sight is focused on one's reflection in the mirror, especially on the eyes of the reflected image, and steadily fixed there, while the mental repetition of a holy name, *zikr*, (ذکر) is done.

This practice also, like the last one, trains the eyesight and helps to develop inner vision. Consequently it has similar effects and limitations.

7 Shughl-i neemkhwaabi (شغل نیم خوابی)

This is a practice in which, when going to sleep, the devotee resolves not to sink into torpor, but remains conscious and mentally alert. When sleep overwhelms him, he tries to keep his eyes open by a great effort of will. Gradually, by practice, a state of semi-consciousness is maintained even when he is otherwise asleep.

This method enables him to attain concentration of the current of his consciousness in his eyes, which may open to him the subtle plane behind the eyes as well as give him certain supernatural powers; but, like the last two practices, it cannot take him above the third eye centre.

8 Shughl-i mayyit (شغل میت)

This is a practice in which the devotee lies down flat on the ground with his back downwards and face upwards, without any pillows or cushions under him. In that posture he tries to concentrate his attention inside behind the eyes by mentally repeating such words as *ana al-haq* (انا الحق).

Among the Hindus this practice is known as *shavaasana* (शवासन), and they repeat the words *sohang* (सोहं) or *aham brahmasmi*

(अहं ब्रह्मस्मि). All these words mean 'I am the same as thou art' or 'I am one with God' or 'I am God'. In this respect this practice slightly resembles the method of modern gyanis (ज्ञानी), who try to impress upon themselves, not after inner mystic realization but by mere intellectual understanding (gyan), that they are identical with the Supreme Being. This method is discussed in detail later under gyan yoga (ज्ञान योग).

The method of *shughl-i maayit* is also known as *shughl-i mansoori* (شغل منصورى) after the name of the great mystic Mansur Hallaj, who might have started with such a practice but who afterwards followed the method of *sultaan al-azkaar* (سلطان الاذکار), the practice described last in the section below.

The practice of *shughl-i maayit* leads to inner concentration and attainment of some supernatural powers but, like other methods of repetition, it does not take one beyond the third eye up into materio-spiritual regions.

9 Shughl-i roohi (شغل روحى)

This is a practice in which the eyes are closed and the tongue is stuck up back in the mouth to close the cavity, slightly in the manner of *khechri mudra* to be described later, with the difference that in the latter the tongue is first elongated and then taken further back than in this practice. Along with this, some holy name is repeated mentally to effect concentration of the attention inside. The posture in this method depends on the mystic teacher, but generally it is sitting cross-legged on the ground, more or less like the lotus pose, *padam aasana* (पद्मासन) of yogis.

This practice brings some inner bliss, called *wajd* (وجد) or *masti* (مستی), consequent upon a sort of merging of the devotee into the divinity or spirituality of the subtle plane behind and above the eyes, but it cannot take one beyond the lower part of the astral plane.

10 Shughl-i basaāt (شغلِ بساط)

This is a practice in which the devotee tries to concentrate his attention on *umm al-dimaagh* (أم الدماغ), commonly known as *nugta-i suwaida* (نقطۂ سفید), the third eye focus, by means of mental repetition of some holy name. First he collects his conscious current in the eyes and then takes it inside, behind and above the eyes, and concentrates on the internal sun below the third eye. Eventually he crosses that sun and reaches the third eye centre.

That gives him a taste of spiritual bliss and invests him with certain supernatural powers, but this method, like the last one, cannot take him beyond the lower part of the astral plane.

11 Shughl-i muqaamaan, mahmudaan-o-sultaanan naseeran (شغلِ مقاماً محموداً و سلطاناً نصیراً)

This is a practice in which the devotee sits cross-legged on the ground in the posture of *padam aasana* (पद्मासन) and fixes his gaze first on the tip of his nose and then takes it inwards. It is known as *trikuti dhyān* (त्रिकुटी ध्यान) among the Hindus. Along with this practice of training the sight to get fixed, some holy name is mentally repeated to help with concentration.

It is said that this method was much favoured by the early followers of Islam. It is calculated to secure the devotee access into the subtle plane above the eyes and in the region of the third eye focus and bring him consequent inner bliss and supernatural powers; but like the last two practices, it cannot take him beyond the astral plane.

12 Karma yoga (कर्म योग)

This is not exactly a method of concentration. It is rather the belief, of course translated into action, that true salvation can be

had through performing right karma or deeds and doing one's duty rather than by renouncing the world. This school advocates the performance of actions without any desire for result or reward. It is essentially a way of living based upon the idea of duty, and renunciation of or indifference to the fruit of actions.

Karma yoga is said to imply the performance of all those good deeds which are prescribed by the Shastras, such as charity, benevolent action, kindness to others and spreading of knowledge. Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that we should not be inactive but perform right karma, without bothering about its results.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Thy business is with the action only,
Never with its fruit;
Therefore act not with the desire for fruit,
Nor be thou to inaction attached.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:47

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिध्येदकर्मणः ॥

Perform thou right action,
For action is superior to inaction;
And if inactive, even the maintenance of thy body
Would not be possible.

BHAGAVAD GITA III:8

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ।

Therefore, without attachment
Constantly perform action, which is duty,

For, by performing action without attachment,
One verily reacheth the Supreme.

BHAGAVAD GITA III:19

The Adi Granth also says:

ਕਾਹੂ ਫਲ ਕੀ ਇਛਾ ਨਹੀ ਬਾਛੈ ॥

One should not desire any fruit
Or reward of one's actions.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.274

ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਹਕਾਮੀ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਹੋਤ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥

Whoever does service without any desire
Findeth the Lord.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.286

This is perhaps the highest kind of karma yoga, but it is impossible to achieve it without long training under an adept of a high type of yoga, which may bring the devotee inner consciousness of transcendent truths. Therefore, at the end Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to become a yogi.

कर्मिं यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

The yogi is greater than the person of action;
Therefore, become thou a yogi, O Arjuna.

BHAGAVAD GITA VI:46

Some followers of this school lay great stress on social service, but in all its forms karma yoga is an attempt at realization through action or active life. Thus, although it may bring us a good reward

after death, it cannot give us true transcendent knowledge during our lifetime. Moreover, by doing karmas, one cannot become *neh karmi* (निहकर्मि) or 'actionless' and go beyond good and evil, beyond morality and relativity, into absolute reality and pure spirituality. Based on the karma theory of the Hindus, this practice may take one to the astral or at most the causal region.

13 Upaasana yoga (उपासना योग)

Upaasana literally means 'sitting near'. *Upaasana yoga* is a method of worship through acts of devotion and service. It has two forms: external and internal.

The outward way is to worship a material idol or image of one's deity externally, performing rituals with one's physical body.

The refined and advanced way is inner mental worship. First of all, by constant practice, the image of one's deity is brought inside into the mind and a mental conception of it made to stay there. Then the devotee attends on this mental picture of the deity, engaging in the worship and adoration of that form. He ritually bathes and puts clean clothes on the deity, offers food, and then prostrates himself before him, and so on, to perform his worship. Of course, all this takes place in his mind, performed mentally only and not physically. This is called *maansik pooja* (मानसिक पूजा), mental worship, and *dhyan* (ध्यान), contemplation of the form of one's deity.

This mental picture, however, is only a subjective idea of ours and therefore this method, although useful for concentration, may not give us knowledge of objective truth. At any rate it cannot take us above the astral plane into the causal or beyond into absolute reality or true spirituality.

Moreover, regarding external worship of an idol or image, if one thinks over the matter, it is easy to understand that the worship of a material idol of our own making cannot give us inner

light. We have five *tattwas* (तत्त्व), or vital elements, and the idol has only one. Naturally if we worship it we shall be degraded from our present position. We are conscious beings and the idol is, after all, inert, dead matter. How can it take us into inner subtle regions?

Some people try to contemplate and meditate on the formless, unseen and infinite, but concentration is hard to achieve by this method. How can one collect one's mind on a point by thinking of the all-pervading infinite, expanded and diffused? Moreover, the final stage which one may reach by this method, in this lifetime or after death, is not above the astral plane.

Regarding concentration on an inner mental image or picture of a saint or incarnation of old, whom we have never met, it should not be forgotten that it is only a reflection of our own mind and thus subjective. Those saints and mystics of the past may have been very great in their own day, but now they are no longer in their material bodies and are not working on the physical plane. They have gone to the high spiritual stages and rest there in peace. In our meditation on them now, it is not they who come, but only a mental picture projected by our own mind. Faith in great masters of the past cannot bring us inner light and spiritual realization. For that we need a living personality, a mystic adept living now in flesh and blood.

पिछलों की जो धारें टेका। जिन को कभी आँख नहिं देखा ॥ ...
 कोई शिव और कोई विष्णु की। कोई राम और कोई कृष्ण की ॥ ...
 क्या दादू क्या नानकपंथी। क्या कबीर क्या पलटू संती ॥
 सब मिल करते पिछली टेका। वक्त गुरु का खोज न नेका ॥ ...
 वक्त गुरु जब लग नहिं मिलई। अनुरागी का काज न सरई ॥

They who put their faith in mystics of the past
 Whom they have never seen with their eyes...
 Some in Shiva, some in Vishnu,

Some in Ram, some in Krishna...
 Even the so-called followers of Dadu,
 Nanak, Kabir and Paltu...
 All depend on mystics of the past
 And make no effort to seek the mystic adept
 Of the present time....
 So long as he findeth not the mystic adept
 Of his own time,
 The true seeker doth not attain his object.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1*

14 **Laa'i yoga** (लय योग)

This is a mystic practice in which one tries to get absorbed, *laa'i* (लय), in the inner light (or sound) behind the eyes and sometimes above the third eye and thus, by casting off one's selfishness or egoism, have a taste of true transcendent bliss.

First of all, the devotee tries to collect the current of his consciousness within himself by means of inner repetition of some holy name, and then he withdraws all his mental powers inside into their source, *antahkaran* (अन्तःकर्ण) or mind. Thus, he makes an attempt to stop all ideas arising in his mind and to confine the thought current within the *antahkaran*. Then with eyes closed and consciousness thus withdrawn inwards, he tries to merge his identity into the inner light (or sound) of the early stages of the astral plane.

The method of *laa'i yoga* gives the devotee a taste of internal spiritual bliss and some subtle supernatural powers, but it cannot take him above the astral plane, the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation (Niranjan Desh), because his aim in this practice is to become merged or absorbed, *laa'i*, in the radiant effulgence or sometimes the transcendent music of that plane. For going further up, some other method has to be adopted.

15 Raj yoga (राज योग)

In raj yoga, as a rule we start by means of repetition of a name, simran (सिमरन), to effect an entry into the sixth centre of subtle matter called *do-dal kamal* (दो दल कँवल), which is just behind the eyes but below the third eye focus. Help is taken here from one's intellectual grasp of the theory of this school and consequent sharpened power of discernment.

In this practice there are various factors – such as *vairag* (वैराग), the feeling of non-attachment and indifference to the material world, and *vivek* (विवेक), the power of discrimination (of distinguishing between real and unreal, good and evil and all forms of duality) – which help us in performing the practice properly and successfully and in taking us further up in the astral plane.

This yoga is said to have been practised in olden times by several kings, who trained their minds and saw inner light without neglecting their work of government and kingship. A notable example is Raja Janak, whom Shukhdev Swami adopted as his Guru and who, by developing and strengthening the power of *vivek* (विवेक), could remain a mahatma and spiritual being while fully discharging his worldly duties. He was in the world but not of it. He not only was uplifted himself but saved other people too. Tulsi Sahib says of him:

ਧਨ ਧਨ ਰਾਜਾ ਜਨਕ ਹੈ, ਜਿਨ ਸੁਮਿਰਨ ਕੀਆ ਬਿਬੇਕ ॥
ਏਕ ਘੜੀ ਕੇ ਸੁਮਿਰਤੇ, ਪਾਪੀ ਤਰੇ ਅਨੇਕ ॥

Great is King Janak,
Who did repetition with discrimination,
And by half an hour's repetition saved many sinners.

TULSI SAHIB, RATNASAGAR, P.87

This yoga, however, does not lay sufficient stress on love and devotion, which are so essential for mystic realization. Moreover, by itself it cannot take us beyond the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation. A few members of this school who had traversed the astral plane adopted gyan yoga (described further on), which is a sort of finer development of raj yoga, to gain access into the causal world of Brahm or Om.

Some people like Swami Vivekananda give the name of raj yoga to ashtanga yoga (अष्टांग योग), which will be dealt with later on along with pranayam.

16 Tapasya (तपस्या)

Tapasya or austerity consists in training the mind by persistence and perseverance, but sometimes it causes devotees to reach a degree of obstinacy or stubbornness. Practices of this kind involve some sort of cruelty or torture to the body. In these, along with the repetition of a holy name, either an arm is held up in the air and kept in that position till it becomes practically lifeless and dry, or the body is kept in cold water for a long time, or fire is burnt all around oneself in the hot weather, or some other similar hardship is undergone.

By thus tormenting the body, the practitioner hopes to achieve a victory of the spirit over the flesh. Although by such rigorous and unreasonable practices one's will power may be strengthened and some sort of training given to one's mind, yet the great sacrifice made and the strenuous effort put in are altogether out of proportion to the little fruit that one reaps. It is like a mountain labouring to produce a mouse.

Tapasya is a good action and brings a good reward after death. In the Puranas and other religious books, stories are given of how Indra (the ruler of paradise) feared losing his throne and felt his

seat shaking due to the great *tapasya* of a certain rishi – and how as a preventive measure he sent down heavenly damsels to tempt that rishi and make him a victim to sensual pleasures.

Thus, *tapasya* may take someone after death to Swarg in the astral plane and give him enjoyment of that place for a certain period, but it cannot yield true knowledge of reality, nor take him up into planes of pure spirituality, beyond good and evil and beyond all actions and desires.

17 Hatha yoga (हठ योग)

Hatha yoga too lays a great emphasis on the body, with precise cleansing practices (*karm*), locks (*bandh*), postures or poses (*aasana*), and breath control (*pranayaam*).

a. *Karm or cleansing practices*

There are six chief cleansing practices performed as part of hatha yoga.

(1) *Neti karm* (नेती कर्म): *Neti* is a small greased cotton cord. By putting one end of it through one nostril and taking it out from the mouth and alternately pulling each end of the cord, the inside of the nose is cleaned. This also helps to clean the inside of the ears, eyes, mouth and teeth.

(2) *Dhoti karm* (धोती कर्म): *Dhoti* is a long strip of cloth about three inches wide, which is first soaked in water and then taken through the mouth into the upper part of the stomach. (One end of this strip is, of course, kept outside.) It is revolved there to clean that part of the stomach, and then pulled out from the mouth and washed. This process is repeated till the inner cleaning is complete.

(3) *Wasti karm* (वस्ती कर्म): This is a method of drawing up a quantity of water through the rectum, keeping it inside for a short while, and then expelling it forcibly in order to clean the lower part of the intestines and bowels. It is like the modern enema of the physicians.

(4) *Kunjar karm* (कुंजर कर्म) or *gaj karm* (गज कर्म): In this practice, one drinks water to one's full capacity and then vomits. This prevents bodily disease.

(5) *Neoli karm* (न्योली कर्म): First the practitioner sits in the posture of *padam aasana* (described under ashtanga yoga) and makes sure that the back is vertically upright, and then draws the abdomen in and moves it right and left. This removes all wind from the stomach and intestines and cleans the insides.

(6) *Trotak karm* (त्राटक कर्म): The practitioner keeps the eyes open and makes them steady and fixed by gazing at the tip of the nose, then takes the gaze to the root of the nose, and finally turns it inwards. This practice trains one to have a good inner conception of any object or person and also to take the faculty of vision inside into subtle planes; it develops one's nirat (निस्त).

In addition to these six major practices, there are four minor ones:

- *Kapal bhati karm*, cleansing breath (कपाल भाती)
- *Dhaunkani karm*, air pipe cleansing (धौंकनी)
- *Baghi karm* (बाघी) and
- *Shankh pishal karm*, conch cleansing (शंख पिशाल)

But these are not so important.

b. Bandh (बंध) or locks

There are four *bandhs* or internal locks (muscular contractions) in hatha yoga:

- *Maha bandh*, great lock (महा बंध)
- *Mool bandh*, root lock (मूल बंध)
- *Jalandhar bandh*, neck lock (जलंधर बंध)
- *Udiaan bandh*, diaphragm lock (उडियान बंध)

Out of these, *mool bandh*, is considered particularly important. These locks are practised to control inner bodily powers and to be able to regulate the working of the inner organs.

c. Aasana (आसन)

There are eighty-four *aasanas* (आसन) or postures in yoga, but the most important are two, which will be described below under the heading of *Aasana* in the mystic practice of ashtanga yoga:

- *Sidh aasana* (सिद्ध आसन)
- *Padam aasana* (पद्मासन)

The practice of these postures is not easy, and the austere course of physical discipline in hatha yoga, though useful in preventing disease of the body and clarifying mental vision, cannot be relied upon for controlling the mind. Moreover, the course is long, tedious and difficult (if not dangerous), and not everyone is fit to go through it successfully. Certainly it is not suitable for the householder (गृहस्थी). In fact, it is a sort of preparatory course for pranayam.

Some of the so-called hatha yogis of today, however, confine themselves to spectacular gymnastics, sometimes involving irrational physical torture. Moreover, the ultimate goal of this school,

even for genuine hatha yogis, is not very high; this yoga cannot take us beyond the astral plane.

18 **Pranayam (प्राणायाम) or habs-i dam (ہبس دم)** **and ashtanga yoga (अष्टांग योग)**

Pranayam is not merely the holding of the breath, as many people nowadays take it to be. That is the first step and a necessary concomitant of the real practice, which culminates in the union of the devotee with the point in the astral plane known as Chidakash (चिदाकश), where the subtle essence of breath is and from where all the kinds and forms of air originate.

Muslim mystics call this practice of controlling the breath *habs-i dam* (ہبس دم). When accompanied with concentration on *tisra til*, the third eye focus, the practice is called *shughl-i barzakh-i kaneez* (شغل از بخ کنیز). It is said that this practice was followed by Hazrat Bu Ali Qalandar. It has three further subdivisions, the details of which we need not go into here.

There are certain preliminaries to pranayam, including *dhoti*, *neti* and *wasti*, which have already been described under the section on hatha yoga. Generally pranayam is performed sitting cross-legged in the lotus pose, *padam aasana* (पद्मासन), which is described further on. There are three parts to this practice:

- *Purak* (पूरक), slowly filling the lungs with breath or inhaling
- *Kumbhak* (कुम्भक), keeping or holding the breath in the lungs
- *Rechak* (रिचक), slowly exhaling the breath out of the lungs

There are eight kinds of *purak*, eight of *kumbhak*, and eight of *rechak*. The relative duration of each of these, called *matra* (मात्रा), is regulated, their ratio or proportion being as follows:

- *Purak* – 2 units of time
- *Kumbhak* – 8 units of time
- *Rechak* – 4 units of time

Gradually the period is increased to 16, 64, and 32 respectively, and in the advanced stages of this practice the period of *kumbhak*, keeping the breath within the lungs, is still further increased till one can hold it there and remain in a trance or samadhi for practically any length of time.

Along with this, the mind is concentrated within, first at the Ganesh or perineal centre, called *guda* or *mool chakra*, by means of repetition of the holy name corresponding to that centre.

धोती नेती बस्ती पाओ, आसन पदम जुगत से लाओ ॥
कुम्भक कर रेचक करवाओ, पहिले मूल सुधार कारज हो सारा है ॥

Perform thou *dhoti*, *neti* and *wasti*,
Sit thou properly in the *padam aasana*,
And do thou *kumbhak* and *rechak*;
Thus to realize thine object,
Concentrate thou first on the *mool chakra*.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL. I, P. 65:2

After controlling this Ganesh centre, the practitioner comes up to the *indri chakra* (इन्द्री चक्र), the reproductive chakra, and then further up till he or she crosses all the six centres of the material creation. Ultimately, the mind is taken with the breath or pranas (प्राण) through the *sushmana* (सुषुम्ना) up to Chidakash (चिदाकाश) in the astral plane, the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation.

In fact pranayam is only a factor, although the most important one, of ashtanga yoga, which is a comprehensive scheme of yoga. As the name implies, ashtanga yoga has eight (*asht*) limbs or branches (*ang*), or eight aspects:

a. *Yam* (यम), restraint, self-control*

The mental attitude and conduct associated with *yam* consist of ten points:

1. Not injuring anyone, *ahimsa* (अहिंसा)
2. Truthfulness, *satya* (सत्य)
3. Non-covetousness, *asteya* (असत्य)
4. Chastity, *brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य)
5. Forbearance, *kshama* (क्षमा)
6. Patience, *dheeraj* (धीरज)
7. Kindness, *daya* (दया)
8. Humility, *deentaa* (दीनता)
9. Taking *saatvik* (सात्विक) food†
10. Cleanliness, *shauch* (शौच)

b. *Niyam* (नियम), chief principles of life

There are ten aspects to *niyam*, all relating to self-restraint and religious observance:

1. Control of the passions, *indri vash* (इन्द्री वश)
2. Contentment, *santosh* (सन्तोष)
3. Faith, *aastikta* (आस्तिकता)
4. Charity, *daan* (दान)
5. Praying to God, *eeshwar aaraadhana* (ईश्वर आराधना)
6. Listening to good things only, *shravan* (श्रवण)
7. Feeling of shame for one's faults, *lajja* (लज्जा)

* Editor's note: Different yogic texts vary slightly in the ethical practices they list under the *yam* and *niyam* headings. Patanjali's Yoga Sutra lists five points under each and some of the Upanishads list ten points. We have maintained Prof. Puri's listings.

† *Saatvik* food, which nurtures a calm and peaceful disposition, is vegetarian food – fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds and milk products – taken fresh in small quantities, lightly prepared in a state of prayerful concentration.

8. Firmness in good deeds, *drirrhata* (दृढ़ता)
9. Recitation, *jaap* (जाप)
10. Sacrifice or renunciation, especially of one's desires, *tyaag* (त्याग)

c. *Aasana* (आसन), posture of the body

There are said to be in all eighty-four lakhs of *aasanas*, out of which eighty-four have been selected for practice. From among these, as already pointed out under hatha yoga, two, *padam aasana* and *sidh aasana*, are important because they can be used in the practice of meditation for spiritual enlightenment. The others are useful for keeping the body healthy.

(1) *Padam aasana* (पद्मासन): This is practised sitting cross-legged on a firm surface with the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh, with the arms crossed round the back, the right hand holding the big toe of the left foot and the left hand that of the right foot, the body in that posture being kept vertically straight and stable.

(2) *Sidh aasana* (सिद्ध आसन): This is practised sitting in such a posture that the left foot comes under the rectum, the right foot is on the organ of reproduction and the back is kept vertically upright.

d. *Pranayam* (प्राणायाम), control of the breath

There are eighty-four kinds of air in the body but ten are chief, out of which two are the most important: *praana* (प्राण) and *apanaa* (अपान) (which will be described under *mudra yoga*). Of these two, *praana*, the breath that goes into the lungs, is the most important.

There are 72,864 energy channels in our body, the root of all being in the navel. Out of these ten are chief; five on the right side and five on the left. Of these again, three are very important:

1. *Ida* (इडा) on the left
2. *Pingala* (पिंगला) on the right
3. *Sushmana* (सुषुम्ना) in the middle

The most important is *sushmana*, through which the soul currents pass. The process of pranayam has already been described above.

e. Pratyaaahaar (प्रत्याहार), withdrawal

This is stopping one's senses from going towards any sensual pleasure, and if they are carried away by the temptation, then bringing them back from there and concentrating one's mind inside. Just as a tortoise, when it is frightened or exposed to danger, withdraws its legs and head within its shell, similarly we withdraw our senses from external sensual objects which attract the senses into their inner source in the mind.

There are five human senses, each with a faculty and temptation of its own:

1. Eyes see and like to behold beautiful objects.
2. Ears hear and like to listen to sweet songs.
3. The nose smells and likes to scent fragrant things.
4. The tongue tastes and likes to eat delicious dishes.
5. The hands and the whole skin give us the sensation of touch or contact and like to feel soft and smooth surfaces.

By pranayam, the pranas are stopped and controlled. Now the senses get power from the pranas. Therefore, when the pranas are stopped or withdrawn, the senses are automatically stopped or controlled. This is the completion of *pratyaaahaar*.

f. Dhaarna (धारणा), holding the pranas

Dhaarna is stopping or holding the pranas at a certain centre

for a certain period and bringing the material *tattwa* (तत्त्व) or element there under control. For instance:

- *Thaman* (थमन): If pranas are held in the guda chakra for two hours or so, then the earth element is conquered. This *dhaarna* is called *thaman* (थमन).

Similarly we have other *dhaarnas*:

- *Drawan* (द्रावन)
- *Dahni* (दहनी)
- *Bhramani* (भ्रामनी)
- *Shankhani* (शंखनी)

By means of these, the four other *tattwas* in the higher centres in the material plane are brought under control.

g. *Dhyan* (ध्यान), contemplation of the Lord

Dhyan is of four kinds:

(1) *Padasth dhyan* (पदस्थ ध्यान): Contemplation of the holy feet of the Lord in one's mind.

(2) *Pindasth dhyan* (पिंडस्थ ध्यान): Contemplation of the Lord with the whole body, by passing through all the six centres of the material creation.

(3) *Rupasth dhyan* (रूपस्थ ध्यान): Contemplation of the form of the Lord in the astral world, above the six chakras of Pind.

(4) *Rupatit dhyan* (रूपातीत ध्यान): Contemplation of the Lord in Sunn (सुन्न), that is, Set Sunn, high up in the astral plane, where all the lower forms are transcended and the devotee attains

sayujya mukti (सायुज्य मुक्ति), 'salvation in union.' This is the highest kind of dhyān.

h. Samadhi (समाधि)

Samadhi (*samaadhi*) is a spiritual trance in which one goes beyond knowledge, gyan, and contemplation, dhyān, and is absorbed in bliss. The contemplation and the contemplated become one. There are four kinds of samadhi:

(1) *Bhakti samadhi* (भक्ति समाधि): By controlling all the senses, the devotee contemplates the lotus feet of the Lord. When he is identified with the Lord in his contemplation, then his samadhi is complete.

(2) *Yoga samadhi* (योग समाधि): By crossing the six chakras of the body by pranayam, the devotee contemplates the Lord in Sunn in the astral plane. When in contemplation the devotee forgets himself altogether, then it is known as yoga samadhi.

(3) *Gyan samadhi* (ज्ञान समाधि): So long as one knows of diversity and multiplicity, so long as by thinking one knows oneself as different from others, the contemplation is imperfect; but when forgetting the difference between 'I' and 'you', one falls naturally into a trance of spiritual knowledge, which is known as gyan samadhi.

(4) *Vigyan samadhi* (विज्ञान समाधि): When one transcends the difference of the knower, the known and the knowing, then it is known as *vigyan samadhi*.

One of the most important facts about yoga (योग) is that it cannot be performed without the help and guidance of a competent contemporary teacher; one cannot do it merely by the study of books.

पोथी माहीं देखि करि, करै जो कोई जोग ।
तन छीजै सिधि न भवै, देही आवै रोग ॥

If by reading in books doth one perform yoga,
His body shall decay and get diseased,
But *sidhi* or success he shall not attain.

CHARANDAS, CHARANDASJI KI BANI, VOL.2, P.67:122

A competent and efficient teacher of this yoga is rare nowadays. Moreover, the final stage of this school, though above the six centres of subtle matter, is not very high in the materio-spiritual regions. The passageway of ascent in this practice is via the subtle *pranas* (प्राण) which get absorbed in *Chidakash* (चिदाकाश) in the astral plane and can go no further. When they stop and get merged there, how can the soul go beyond when it travels by riding on them? Hence, the last stage for this yoga is *Niranjan Desh*, the first plane of the materio-spiritual creation. It cannot take us into or even near the purely spiritual realms.

Besides, *pranayam* is a very difficult and risky method. Not only are perfect adepts of this practice extremely rare these days, but even the precautions essential to this kind of yoga are hard to observe. One has to be extra careful about the quality as well as the quantity of the food one takes, for even a slight deviation from the fixed rule may be attended with very unpleasant consequences. Moreover, the strain of holding the breath for a long time involves great risk to the lungs. In attempting it, several persons have impaired their lungs and in some cases it has proved fatal. It is thus not a safe practice at all and certainly not for the householder (गृहस्थी).

Hindu rishis of olden times had very strong physiques and lived in jungles. They had no household duties to perform and no cares or worries of the world to bother them. They could devote all their time and energy to this practice. Still the fruit they reaped was much too inadequate for the hardship they bore and the pain

they suffered, for by pranayam, as pointed out above, they could not go above the astral plane.

For people of today, whose bodies are weak and frail, pranayam is not only unsuitable as a mystic practice but may prove positively harmful, and there are other practices that are safer and more efficacious. Pranayam was in fact meant for other yugas (युग) or cycles of time, when people lived much more than a hundred years; not for Kaliyug (कलियुग), when the span of our life is hardly seventy or so and our strength and energy very much reduced.

19 Shughl-i naseera (شغل نصیره)

In this practice the devotee first begins by steadying his gaze on the tip of his nose or just in front of the nose. Afterwards he shifts the focus of his eyes to the root of the nose, and then withdraws his attention inwards into the astral plane. This is like the *trotak karm* (त्रोटक कर्म) of hatha yoga described already, and the *chachri mudra* (चाचरी मुद्रा) of yogis discussed later under mudra yoga.

After this, when the conscious current of the soul and mind is concentrated and collected inside at the threshold of the astral plane, the practitioner of *shughl-i naseera* listens to the sounds coming from above. However he does not discriminate between different sounds, but listens to the Ghor Shabd (घोर शब्द), 'undifferentiated sound'.

Thus, by constant practice the devotee finds access into Niranjana Desh, the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation, and listens to and gets absorbed in the ten kinds of music there: the whistling sound of birds in single and double tones, bells, conch, lute, cymbals, flute, drum, big drums, and thunder of clouds. Absorbed in the music, the practitioner does not go further up beyond the astral plane.

This music of ten kinds of the first materio-spiritual stage is mentioned in *Hamsa Upanishad* thus:

नादो दशविधो जायते । विणीति प्रथमः । चिंचिणीति द्वितीयः ।
 घण्टनादस्तृतीयः । शंखनादश्चतुर्थः । पंचमस्तंत्रीनादः ।
 षष्ठस्तालनादः ।
 सप्तमो वेणुनादः । अष्टमो मृदंगनादः । नवमो भेरीनादः ।
 दशमो मेघनादः ।

Naad (music) is of ten kinds. The first is (the ringing sound of) *chini*; the second is (the echoing ring of) *chini-chini*; the third is the sound of a bell; the fourth of a conch; the fifth of a *tantri* (lute); the sixth is the sound of *tala* (cymbals); the seventh of a flute; the eighth of a *mridanga* (double drum); the ninth of a *bheri* (drum); and the tenth of clouds or thunder.

HAMSA UPANISHAD

Sant Charandas mentions these sounds as follows:

दल हजार को कमल है, गगन मण्डल में वास ।
 जाप सहस्र जहां जपै, तेज पुंज परकास ॥
 जोग जुक्ति करि खोजि ले, सुरत निरत कर चीन ।
 दश प्रकार अनहद बजै, होय जहाँ लवलीन ॥
 एक भंवर गुंजार सी, दूजै घुंघरू होय ।
 तीजे शब्द जु शंख का, चौथे घण्टा सोय ॥
 चौथे घण्टा सोय, पाँचवें ताल जु बाजै ।
 छठे सु मुरली नाद, सातवें भेरि जु गाजै ॥
 अठवें शब्द मृदंग का, नाद नफीरी नोय ।
 दसवें गरजनि सिंह सी, चरणदास सुनि लोय ॥
 दश प्रकार अनहद घुरै, जित योगी होय लीन ।
 इन्द्रि थकि मनुआँ थकै, चरणदास कहि दीन ॥

In the heavens is a thousand-petalled lotus,
 Where recitation is a thousand times performed,
 And where manifesteth the powerful, radiant light.

Seek it thou by the method of yoga
 And behold it with the eye of the soul.
 Soundeth there ten kinds of Anahad (Unplayed Music),
 Where mergeth thy being.
 First is like the humming of bees,
 Second the tinkling of small bells;
 Third the sound of conch, fourth of a big bell;
 Of *tala* (cymbals) the fifth,
 Sixth of a flute, seventh resoundeth the *bheri* (drum),
 Eighth a *mridanga* (double drum),
 Ninth the sound of a *nafiri* (trumpet),
 And tenth is like the roaring of a lion.
 Listen thou, O Charandas.
 Ten kinds of Anahad soundeth
 Where yogis get absorbed;
 Senses stop and the mind stops, saith Charandas.

CHARANDAS, *SHRI BHAKTISAGAR GRANTH*, P.127

There is a slight variation in the two descriptions of the ten kinds of Anahad Shabd of the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation, the astral plane – the one given in the *Hamsa Upanishad* and the other by Swami Charandas – but this need not worry us. In the first place, the two accounts agree on the salient points. Secondly, it is not necessary that everyone should hear all these sounds and in the same order. It depends on the degree of purity and cleanliness of the mind of each individual as to which sound he will hear first and in which order he will hear the others.

The degree of cleanliness of the mind is not the same in all, and the way and order in which these sounds are heard is determined by the relative inner purity of each individual. But all mystics of this school count ten kinds of music on the astral plane, the first stage in the materio-spiritual creation, where they have the impression of merging their being and which is thus, for them, the final stage.

20 Mudra yoga (मुद्रा योग)

There are five well-known *mudras*. In each *mudra*, the practitioner concentrates his attention while holding a position in a certain part of the body.

a. *Khechri mudra* (खेचरी योग)

In this *mudra*, first the tongue is cleaned with water, and then honey and other ingredients are rubbed under it. Afterwards by holding the tongue with the left hand, the tissue connecting the tongue with the lower part of the mouth is gradually scratched with a sharp instrument such as a knife, so that the tissue may gently be cut off freeing the tongue to be turned upwards and inwards. Then by rubbing it with almond oil, and repeatedly pulling it out with the hand, the tongue is made long enough to allow its tip, when turned inwards, to reach the cavity of the throat and cover it.

This generally takes about six months. When, by constant practice, this is achieved, then the devotee washes the cavity of the throat and, by turning the tongue inwards, fixes its tip on the cavity and blocks it, so that the nectar which may drop from the head or brain during practices like pranayam may fall on the tongue and be tasted by the devotee to give him happiness and bliss. This is the most important *mudra*; its place is in the mouth.

b. *Bhuchri mudra* (भूचरी मुद्रा)

The place of this *mudra* is in the nose. There are two chief kinds of *praana* (vital air) (प्राण वायु) in the body:

1. The breath that goes into the lungs through the mouth and nose and is then exhaled is called *praana* (प्राण).
2. The wind that passes out of the rectum is called *apana* (अपान).

By this *mudra* the second kind, *apana*, is brought up and mixed with *praana*, the first kind. The devotee sits in *sidh aasana* and closes the opening at the rectum with the heel of one of his feet. Then by controlling *apana* air, he gradually brings it up and turns it into *praana*. The good of doing this is that when air or prana is thus controlled, the mind, which is ever shaking, becomes steady and collected. This *mudra* gives the devotee some internal happiness and helps the devotee in any further mystic practice.

c. Chachri mudra (चाचरी मुद्रा)

The place of this *mudra* is in the eyes, which are by constant practice trained to keep open and gaze fixedly at a point about four to six inches in front of the nose.

अंगुल चार नासिका आगे । चित अस्थिर करि देखन लागे ॥

Fixing the eyes at four fingers' width
In front of the nose,
He should gaze with a concentrated mind.

CHARANDAS, *SHRI BHAKTISAGAR GRANTH*, P.95

Then the focus of the sight is shifted to the tip of the nose and then turned inwards into subtle planes. It is like the *trotak karm* of hatha yoga. At that time the eyes of the devotee are automatically closed and one beholds the inner sky, sun and moon and finds access into the astral world. This *mudra* thus yields inner happiness and peace.

d. Agochri mudra (अगोचरी मुद्रा)

The place of this *mudra* is in the ears. By this the hearing power and the knowing power are united, so that by turning them inside and listening to the internal sound, the mind and senses become steady and yield true peace, bliss and knowledge.

e. *Unmani mudra* (उनमनी मुद्रा)

The place of this *mudra* is in the tenth door or third eye, which is the seat of the soul in the waking condition, midway between the two eyes and inwards. That is the window opening into the astral plane. By entering that window the devotee attains *sidh samaadhi* (सिद्ध समाधि) during which all worry and fear disappear and the soul feels the bliss of union with the divine regent on the astral plane.

f. *A higher and subtler mudra*

This is a sort of an extension of *unmani mudra* which was adopted by some Hindu rishis of old for going from the astral plane (सूक्ष्म जगत) to the next higher stage, the causal creation (कारण लोक). In this sense, *mudra* is a technical name for the spiritual light rays which, coming down from Brahm or Om, fall on Chidakash (चिदाकाश) in the astral plane of Niranjana.

Having reached Chidakash by pranayama or other means, those rishis wanted to go further up. Seeing these light rays coming from above, they concentrated their soul on these and riding on them, so to speak, secured access into the higher stage, Brahm Lok (ब्रह्म लोक), from where these light rays emanate. Although the current and flow of these rays is downwards, yet the soul can ascend upwards by riding on them, just as fish can swim up a current of falling water.

But even this very fine *mudra* cannot take us above the top of materio-spiritual creation, beyond Brahm or Om into the purely spiritual realms where alone we have absolute reality and attainment of true salvation.

21 Gyan yoga (ज्ञान योग) and Vedanta (वेदान्त)

This school believes in securing salvation and access to higher spiritual planes through gyan (ज्ञान), knowledge. Its followers

try to impress deeply and firmly on their minds the great mystic truths, such as about the nature of the spirit or soul and its oneness with God, by dwelling continuously and constantly on them. When Lord Krishna tries to impart gyan to Arjuna, he explains:

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।
न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥

Nor at any time verily was I not,
Nor thou, nor these princes of men,
Nor verily shall we ever cease to be hereafter.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:12

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तो न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

He who thinks he kills,
And he who thinks he is killed,
Ignorant are both of them;
For neither doth one kill, nor is one killed.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:19

About the soul he further says:

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

Never is it born, nor doth it die;
Nor is it such that living once, it may not live again.
Everlasting and eternal it is;
Even with the destruction of the body, it doth not die.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:20

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him,
Nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:23

Vedanta (वेदान्त) is the essence of gyan yoga. It is of two kinds: *praacheen*, 'old', and *naveen*, 'new'.

a. Praacheen (प्राचीन) Vedanta

Earlier Vedantists, by the practice of ashtanga yoga, pranayam and the subtle *unmani mudra*, reached the stage of Brahm or Om and identified with Brahm. After this realization, they could truly say, "I am Brahm" (अहं ब्रह्मस्मि). Such a one was Rishi Vyas, who had merged himself in and attained the transcendent knowledge of oneness with Brahm. But before this internal realization, he had undergone the training of yoga in all its aspects and passed through its earlier stages.

b. Naveen (नवीन) Vedanta

As with any religion or system of realization, practitioners can delude themselves by equating their concepts with actual spiritual attainment. Present-day Vedantists who do not do any practice or get any training in yoga, who merely read the accounts of earlier Vedantists and begin to say, "I am God", may be philosophically correct but have not spiritually realized what they claim. If a prisoner before he is set at liberty begins to say, "I am a king", saying this does not make him a king. He should first adopt a method which may liberate him and make him a true king. Similarly, to really be freed from the bondage of maya and realize oneness with God, a person has to adopt a proper mystic practice.

बिना योग ज्ञानी नाहिं होई । जनम मरन से छुटे न कोई ॥

Without yoga no one can be a gyani,
And none can go out of birth and death.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 24:1:65

यह करनी का भेद है, नाहीं बुद्धि विचार ।
बुद्धि छोड़ करनी करो, तो पावो कुछ सार ॥

It is the secret of doing, not of intellectual theorizing;
Only by giving up thinking and doing (yoga) practically
Canst thou know the essence of reality.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 24:1:148

When we look upon ourselves as God – based only on theory and intellectual understanding – we are just *vaachak gyaani* (वाचक ज्ञानी), theoretically enlightened ones. There is a world of difference between theory and practical realization. By mere theory we do not get rid of our weaknesses and ignorance or shake off pain and sorrow. So long as we are slaves to passions, we cannot become great like the true mystics merely by uttering their words. Those who remain content with theory and mere talk lower and degrade true Vedanta and gyan yoga.

c. Fourfold training in gyan yoga

There are four factors for training in gyan yoga, *vivek* (discrimination), *vairaagya* (renunciation), *khat sampadi* (six aspects of moral training) and *mamokshta* (freedom from I-ness).

(1) *Vivek* (विवेक): Discernment and differentiation between right and wrong, real and unreal, and so on, such as realizing that the soul is real and the world is unreal.

आत्म सत सरूप है, जग ताके प्रतिकूल।
ऐसा ज्ञान विवेक है, सब साधन का मूल।

Soul is truth and the world opposite to it;
Such a knowledge is *vivek*,
The root of all practices.

NISCHALDAS, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

(2) *Vairaaag* (वैराग) or *vairaaagya*: Mental turning away from the world or renouncing the unreal and thus, by elimination, retaining the positive real.

ब्रह्म लोक लग भोग जो, चाहत सबन का त्याग।
वेद अर्थ ज्ञानी मुनी, कहत ताहि वैराग ॥

Giving up the desire of all enjoyments up to Brahm Lok
Is by the Vedas, gyanis and munis called *vairaaag*.

(3) *Khat sampadi* (षट समपदी): Six kinds of moral training:

1. *Sam* (सम): Balanced mind
2. *Dam* (दम): Control of passions
3. *Tatikshta* (ततीक्षता): Forbearance
4. *Upraamta* (उपरामता): Indifference to worldly things
5. *Saavdhaanta* (सावधानता): Alertness of mind
6. *Shraddha* (श्रद्धा): Faith and devotion

(4) *Mamokshta* (ममोक्षता): Selflessness and riddance from egoism.

Many so-called gyanis do not care for this fourfold training but try to jump to the last stage of realization and transcendent knowledge all at once. Therefore, they fail.

ज्ञान ध्यान सब बाचक फैला । जोग जुक्ति में ठेलमठेला ॥
साधन चारों सब के ढीले । जो समझाओ तो करें दलीलें ॥

Only theoretical gyan and dhyān is spread;
The method of practical yoga has been set aside.
In the four kinds of training, all are slack;
And if they are told so, they begin to argue.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 24:1:25-26

The gyan yogis who follow a practice generally focus on three centres in particular:

- *Netra* (नेत्र): Eyes
- *Hridaya* (हृदय): Heart
- *Kanth* (कंठ): Throat

In the waking condition all these centres are below the seat of the soul, below the third eye. Adepts among the earlier as well as among modern Vedantists and gyan yogis can reach as far as Brahm, but not the purely spiritual planes higher up. Gyan, inner knowledge, is the result of yoga or mystic practice, and mystic practice cannot successfully be performed without bhakti or devotion to the mystic adept. Hence, gyan and yoga both depend on bhakti; bhakti is the real, essential component of mysticism.

In some schools, gyan yoga is more idealistic theory than practice and it assumes knowledge which has yet to be achieved through devotion and personal mystic realization. Moreover, its ultimate goal, as already pointed out, even in the case of the genuine and highest gyanis, is below the purely spiritual planes. Gyan yoga cannot take one above Brahm or Om, the top of the materio-spiritual region.

या ते ज्ञान जोग दोड खंडन । भक्ति भाव संतन कीयो मंडन ॥

For this reason, gyan and yoga both are discarded,
And saints have upheld bhakti and devotion.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 24:1:71*

22 Bhakti yoga (भक्ति योग)

Bhakti yoga is not exactly a yoga, nor a practice, but a way of life. Devotion, *bhakti*, means our intense attachment to the beloved Lord and utter surrender and resignation to his supreme will, consequent upon our complete faith in his perfection, kindness and loving nature. In bhakti yoga, whatever the Guru says the true devotee accepts and obeys, even if the intellect does not understand it. Our intellect is limited and frail, but the wisdom of the mystic adept is infallible.

ہم سجادہ رکن گرت پیرمغاں گوید کہ سالک بے خبر نمود ز راہ و رسم منزلہا

Dye thy prayer mat in wine
If thy Guru telleth thee so,
For he is not unaware of the ins and outs of the path.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.2, 1:3

गुरु आज्ञा से जो शिष करई ।
वह करतूत भक्ति फल देई ॥

With Guru's permission whatever the disciple doeth,
That action yieldeth him the fruit of bhakti.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:19*

This complete submission is the ideal of bhakti, love and devotion. It is called *sharan* (शरण), taking shelter or refuge – entire

dependence on the Guru – as contrasted with *karni* (करनी), or doing the mystic practice with a great effort. In fact, without devotion and faith, *karni* is neither effective nor fruitful.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

The faith of each is shaped
To his own nature, O Bharata.
A person consisteth of his faith;
That which his faith is, he is even that.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVII:3

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥

Whatsoever is wrought without faith –
Oblation, gift, austerity or any other deed –
Asat (untruth) is it called, O Partha,
And nought it is here and hereafter.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVII:28

Faith and love are essential to mystic realization. However, the more we do the mystic practice, the firmer will our faith be. These two, *sharan* and *karni*, go hand in hand, but *sharan* is the more important of the two, for it is based on love and devotion. Love is all-embracing; it overwhelms the whole of one's being.

When the disciple is convinced that his Guru is true and perfect and has become one with God, then he leaves himself entirely in his hands. Inwardly he feels his great kindness and love, and he himself also cherishes the highest and deepest love for the Guru. Thus, a mutual and reciprocal attraction, *kashish-i jaan yakin*

(کشش جاں-یقین), is created between the two, and the disciple takes on the colour of his Guru and, under his great spiritual influence, is transformed into a divine being.

It is said that love is natural and cannot be acquired or learned. Although it may be true that the seed of love is inborn, yet it is *satsang* (सत्संग) – contact with the beloved Guru, his company and discourses – that nourishes the seed of love and helps it develop into a full-grown plant and later into a tall, strong tree of devotion. The Perfect Guru is an ocean of love, and through contact with him love is kindled in the heart of the devotee too.

عشق اول در دل معشوق پیدای شود

Love is first born in the heart of the Beloved.

RUMI, IN *NUKAT-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, p.93

And then the beauty of that true love – for love is the highest kind of beauty – inspires the devotee too, and he finds love manifesting itself in his heart. Love generates love; that is true and real love. In bhakti yoga, we should become simple-hearted like a child of forty days.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

BIBLE, *MATTHEW* 18:3

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein.

BIBLE, *MARK* 10:15

The disciple should have firm and perfect faith in the Guru, always looking upon him as a God-realized being and never even

for a moment or even in a dream thinking of him as only a human being. If such is not the belief and attitude of the devotee, if his faith in the Guru does not come up to this high standard, then he still lacks in devotion, and his love or bhakti cannot have its full effect or power. The devotee says to the Lord:

अवगुन मेरे बाप जी, बकस गरीब निवाज ।
जो मैं पूत कपूत हौं, तऊ पिता को लाज ॥

O Father, merciful and kind, forgive me my faults.
If I am unworthy, still thy son am I,
And you are responsible for me.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p.97:8

سپر دم تو مایه خویش را تودانی حساب کم و بیش را

All my wealth (of good and bad actions)
Do I place at thy feet, O Lord,
For thou knowest the account of my gain and loss.

TRADITIONAL SAYING QUOTED IN

JAME FIROZ-UL-LUGHAT, p.776

Bhakti is, no doubt, a condition of the heart and an attitude of the mind, but it manifests itself in the thought, word and deed of the devotee, who is ever anxious to be of use to the beloved Lord, to serve him in whatever way he can and to secure everlasting union with him. He places his all – his wealth, his body, his mind and soul – before the Guru, known in the Muslim tradition as the Friend of God, and is prepared to sacrifice everything for him.

For his part, the Guru needs nothing from the disciple and asks only that one carry out the spiritual practice every day. That spirit of service and sacrifice is an unfailing attendant to a devoted heart; the inner feeling of love and bhakti, which permeates every

pore of the devotee's being, naturally finds an outlet in meditation practice and in a life of service. Bhakti is of two kinds:

- Mixed bhakti, in which service on the part of the devotee is accompanied by a lingering desire to get some reward or good in return. This is *sakaam bhakti* (सकाम भक्ति) and is of a lower order.
- Pure bhakti, in which there is no desire for any reward. It is *nishkaam bhakti* (निष्काम भक्ति), service for the sake of service, and devotion for the sake of devotion.

राजा राना राव रैंक, बड़ा जो सुमिरै नाम ।
कह कबीर बड़ों बड़ा, जो सुमिरै निःकाम ॥

Among kings, rulers, the rich and the poor,
Great is the one who repeateth Nam.
But who repeateth without any desire
Is the greatest of the great, saith Kabir.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p.87:2

This is the highest kind of bhakti. Bhakti here is not a means to some other end, but the end in itself. The devotee has love and devotion for his beloved Guru because he finds that he is most loveable, because he feels that the Guru's love for him is irresistible, because his soul is drawn by the spiritual attraction of his Guru, and he simply cannot help it, so to speak. He is enraptured in the bliss of love and deeply grateful for having been accepted into the Guru's fold.

Moreover, bhakti and service may be based on one's intelligent grasp of the greatness and kindness of the Guru, that is, based on one's reason, or it may be due to one's feeling of intense love for the Guru engendered by the Guru's divine love for frail humanity, that is, based on love itself. This second sort of bhakti is the higher one.

Some mystics have thus mentioned the following two kinds of bhakti.

a. Navadha bhakti (नवधा भक्ति)

In *navadha* (ninefold) *bhakti*, devotion is based on reason. The characteristics of this are described in one of the Hindu holy books, *Bhagavata Purana*, and also in the lines given below:

सुमिरन बंदन ध्यान और पूजा करो ।
 प्रभु सँ प्रीति लगाय सुरति चरनन धरो ॥
 होकरि दासहिं भाव साध संगति रलो ।
 भक्तन की करि सेव यही मति है भलो ॥
 आपा अर्पन देइ धीर्ज दृढ़ता गहो ।
 छिमा सील संतोष दया धारे रहो ॥

Remember, bow down before,
 Contemplate and love the Guru.
 With love for God, place thou thy soul at his feet.
 As a servant enter thou the fold of his followers;
 Serve his devotees – this is good for thee.
 Sacrifice thyself,
 Hold thou fast to patience and firmness,
 And ever keep with thee forbearance,
 Chastity, contentment and kindness.

CHARANDAS, *CHARANDASJI KI BANI*, VOL. I, P. 25

In following this kind of devotional path, all these great qualities have to be imbibed and one's life regulated by a control of reason over the lower passions.

b. Prem bhakti (प्रेम भक्ति)

In *prem bhakti*, devotion is based on love, *prem*. In this kind of bhakti, reason is transcended by the intensity of love, and it is

love for the Guru that controls all the actions and thoughts of the devotee. All those qualities mentioned in the description of the first kind come along with it as a matter of course. The mind is naturally moulded in the direction of love. This is the highest kind of bhakti – other yogas and gyan cannot reach it.

सब मत अधिकी प्रेम बतावैं ।

जोग जुगत सँ बड़ा दिखावैं ॥

All religions sing of the greatness of love
And show it to be better than yoga practices.

CHARANDAS, *CHARANDASJI KI BANI*, VOL. I, P. 10

प्रेम बराबर जोग न प्रेम बराबर ज्ञान ।

प्रेम भक्ति बिन साधिवो सबही थोथा ध्यान ॥

Yoga cannot equal love, nor can gyan;
Without love and devotion, O mystics,
All contemplation is empty.

CHARANDAS, *CHARANDASJI KI BANI*, VOL. I, P. 11

Love is the greatest spiritual force; it naturally brings about that concentration of attention which is the first object of all mystic methods. It is attained after long and arduous practice and it opens the way to inner spiritual transport, leading the soul higher up to the final stage of the Guru. The attention of the devotee is concentrated on the beloved Guru; the devotee thinks of the Guru day and night. He must go to him, to his supreme abode in the subtle spiritual planes. Where else can he go when he is attached to the Guru by ties of love, unbreakable and invincible?

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्तयत्र संशयः ॥

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

The one who, casting off the body,
Goeth forth thinking of me only,
At the time of the end
Entereth into my being –
There is no doubt of that.
Whosoever at the end abandoneth the body,
Thinking of any being,
To that being only he goeth.

BHAGAVAD GITA VIII:5-6

The fruit of bhakti is great and sweet, for in its wake it brings true knowledge, deep bliss and eternal union with the beloved Lord. What is extremely hard to attain even through strenuous efforts is easily and naturally effected by love and devotion in mystic practices. Love is the true philosopher's stone; it transmutes base human beings into divine beings. Our love and devotion for the Perfect Guru elevates us to higher regions and transports us to spiritual planes. True transcendent knowledge and higher consciousness are the fruits of bhakti.

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥
भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥

I cannot be seen as thou hast seen me
Through the Vedas, nor through austerities,
Nor by alms, nor by offerings.
Only by devotion to me
I may thus be perceived, O Arjuna,

And be known and beheld in essence,
And entered.

BHAGAVAD GITA XI:53-54

When we get deeply devoted to our Guru, when we sacrifice our all to him, when we look upon him as the highest being and sole protector and fall at his feet with our heart and soul, when giving up all our knowledge and wisdom we seek his guidance, when we think and feel that we ourselves are nothing and our Guru is all, then the Guru (of course if he is a true Guru and has access to higher spiritual planes), bound by love and devotion, looks after us as a loving mother looks after and brings up her little child and, out of his own grace and mercy, saves us from all dangers and takes us up to the highest abode of his mystic ascent.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬੋਹਿਥਾ ਵਿਰਲੈ ਕਿਨੈ ਵੀਚਾਰਿਆ ॥
ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਪਾਰਿ ਉਤਾਰਿਆ ॥

Satguru is the ship, but rarely doth a person realize it;
By his own kindness doth he give us salvation.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.470

ਜਿਨੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਿਉ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ਸੋ ਖਾਲੀ ਕੋਈ ਨਾਹਿ ॥
ਤਿਨ ਜਮ ਕੀ ਤਲਬ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਨਾ ਓਇ ਦੁਖ ਸਹਾਹਿ ॥

Who hath devoted himself to Satguru,
Empty-handed is he not.
The angel of death shall not summon him,
Nor shall he suffer pain.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.950

This path of salvation and union with the Lord is the path of devotion. Lord Krishna also, after dwelling upon other kinds

of yogas and practices such as austerities and penances (*tapasya*), karam yoga and gyan yoga, lays final stress on devotion or bhakti as the highest spiritual path.

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
 ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥
 अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
 साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

The same am I to all beings;
 There is none hateful to me nor dear.
 They who worship me with devotion verily
 Are in me, and I am also in them.
 Even if the most sinful worships me
 With undivided heart,
 He too must be accounted righteous,
 For he hath made the right resolution.

BHAGAVAD GITA IX:29-30

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
 मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

Keep thou thy mind in me, devote thou thyself to me,
 Worship me and prostrate thyself before me.
 I pledge thee my troth:
 Thou shalt come unto me, for thou art dear to me.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVIII:65

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
 निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ।

Place the mind in me, into me let thy reason enter;
 Then without doubt shall thou abide in me hereafter.

BHAGAVAD GITA XII:8

And again:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापे यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Give up all religions
And come unto me alone for shelter.
Fear not, I shall liberate thee from all sins.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVIII:66

The devotee is freed from all sins and desires by taking refuge in the beloved Lord. Similarly, Jesus Christ invited people to follow him and give him their devotion.

I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.

BIBLE, JOHN 11:25-26

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

BIBLE, JOHN 14:6

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 11:28-29

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

BIBLE, JOHN 6:37

Great mystics come into the world to teach us bhakti, and through love and devotion they unite us with God.

ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਦੁਹਰੂ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਆਏ ॥
ਜੀਅ ਦਾਨੁ ਦੇ ਭਗਤੀ ਲਾਇਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਲੈਨਿ ਮਿਲਾਏ ॥

For the good of others are they born;
They are neither in birth nor in death.
The gift of life do they bestow on us,
On the path of devotion do they place us,
And with the Lord do they unite us.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.749

Other great mystics express the same idea:

ਰਾਖਾਸ਼ਵਾਮੀ ਧਰਾ ਨਰ ਰੂਪ ਜਗਤ ਮੇਂ। ਗੁਰੂ ਹੋਯ ਜੀਵ ਚਿਤਾਏ ॥
ਜਿਨ ਜਿਨ ਮਾਨਾ ਵਚਨ ਸਮਝ ਕੇ। ਤਿਨ ਕੋ ਸੰਗ ਲਗਾਏ ॥
ਕਰ ਸਤਸੰਗ ਸਾਰ ਰਸ ਪਾਯਾ। ਪੀ ਪੀ ਰੂਪ ਅਥਾਏ।
ਗੁਰੂ ਸੰਗ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਕਰੀ ਤਨ ਏਸੀ। ਜਸ ਚਕੋਰ ਚੰਦਾਏ ॥ ...
ਏਸੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਲਗੀ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁਮੁਖ। ਸੋ ਸੋ ਗੁਰੁ ਅਪਨਾਏ ॥

Radha Soami appeareth in the world as a human being,
And as Guru doth he awaken the people.
Who understandeth and accepteth his word,
Him he taketh unto himself.
In his satsang (company and discourses)
Doth one find true nectar
And by drinking of it getteth he peace.
Guru he loveth as the moonbird loveth the moon....
Who hath such a profound love for his Guru,
That devotee is by him made his own.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 1:2

From a spiritual perspective, the Guru is one with God, and therefore love of Guru leads to love and worship of God.

गुरु करो खोज कर भाई । बिन गुरु कोइ राह न पाई ॥
 जग डूबा भौजल धारा । कोइ मिला न काढ़नहारा ॥
 जग पंडित भेख बिचारे । क्या जोगी ज्ञानी हारे ॥
 संतन से प्रीत न धारी । क्यों उतरें भौजल पारी ॥ ...
 अब चेतो समझो भाई । कर प्रीत गुरु संग आई ॥
 कह कर राधास्वामी गाई । करनी कर मिले बड़ाई ॥

Accept your Guru after thorough scrutiny, brother,
 For without a Guru no one can find the way.
 Everyone is drowning
 Because they have failed to find someone
 To ferry them across this ocean of existence.
 Ascetics and the learned are helpless in this world,
 Yogis and gyanis have given up in despair.
 How could they cross this ocean
 When they have developed no love for the saints?...
 Remember and understand, brother:
 Come to the Master and cultivate love for him.
 Through practice, you achieve real greatness!

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 18:1

One form of yoga is the mystic practice of *shughl-i barzakh-i kabeer* (شغل برزخ کبیر), which enjoins on its followers concentration on *insaan al-kaamil*, a human being perfected in God – that is, a Perfect Murshid or Perfect Master, a Satguru – both in his external manifestation as a human being as well as in his inner spiritual being. This practice is prevalent among certain schools of Muslim mystics; it leads to the unravelling of higher truths and spiritual mysteries. Bhakti is an essential factor in all mystic training; without devotion to the Guru, no inner awakening or transport is possible. Guru Gobind Singh also says:

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੈ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ
 ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

The truth do I utter, let all hear:
Who loveth, he alone findeth the Lord.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *DASAM GRANTH*, P.14

Love is said to be the noblest sentiment of the human heart, but in fact it is not only a sentiment, it is the ultimate reality of all life and creation. God is an ocean of love and the soul a drop of him. The purer one's love, the nearer one is to the Lord. Love is the one tie that cannot be broken; even death, which shatters all connections of this world, cannot sunder the relationship of love. If God can be bound by anything, it is by the chains of love and devotion.

Of all methods of approach to the Supreme Being and of access into subtle planes, bhakti is the highest path. On the physical plane, it is difficult to understand true love; for here it is all a mixture – love mixed with lower feelings and tendencies – and consequently it is not so effective and powerful. The pure essence of love begins from the stage of Parbrahm, where all covers are removed from the soul. There it shines in its genuine radiance of twelve suns; in Sat Lok it attains its union with the absolute Lord. Love is seen there in its full bloom.

The final stage for bhakti yoga is not any fixed point. As to how far the devotee goes, this depends on the inner reach and access of one's mystic adept. If the Guru is confined to the six centres of material creation, the disciple can go no further. If the Guru has reached up to Niranjana, the devotee will stop there in the astral plane. If the Guru goes up to Om, his disciple can go up to that point but not higher. If the Guru has access to the Parbrahm plane but not beyond, the devotee will go up to that last point of his Guru's stage. But if one is so fortunate as to find a Guru of the highest spiritual stage of Satnam and Anami, then by devotion to him one secures entry into that highest plane of pure spirituality and absolute transcendence.

Thus, love and devotion alone can take one to the final stage of creation and unite one with the ultimate Lord. This is the

secret of bhakti yoga, but the difficulty here is that, in the first place, true and perfect Gurus are extremely rare and hard to find; and secondly, if by some stroke of good luck we come across one, it is not easy to recognize him as such and have faith in him. For union with God, however, the devotee has first to merge himself in the Guru; first one has to attain the stage of *fana fi ash-shaikh* (فنا فی الشیخ), merging in the being of Guru, before he can achieve oneness with God, *fana fi Allah* (فنا فی الله). The true essence of love is the inner spiritual transcendent Sound, the music known as the Shabd or Word, and as the Anahad Shabd, the unending Word, the unstruck Sound (अनहद शब्द), which is the real being of God.

God is love.

BIBLE, 1 JOHN 4:16

Therefore, the mystic practice of the Word or Anahad Shabd, which engenders and kindles love for the Lord in our hearts, is the key to the highest bhakti yoga, and is termed Surat Shabd Yoga, meaning the union or merging (*yoga*) of soul consciousness (*surat*) in the Word of God or divine Sound (*shabd*).

23 Surat Shabd Yoga (सुरत शब्द योग) or Sultan al-Azkar (سلطان الاذکار)

In this practice, which is also known as Shughl-i Sawt-i Sarmadi, the Practice of the Eternal Sound (شغل صوت سرمدی), and by several other names – such as Shabd Yoga, the Yoga of the Word or Sound (शब्द योग), Sahaj Yoga, the Natural Yoga (सहज योग), and Shabd Abhyas, the Practice of the Sound or Word (शब्द अभ्यास) – the devotee begins by concentrating the attention at the third eye focus above the six centres of the material creation and listening to the internal sound of the bell. Gradually traversing the materio-spiritual planes and passing through the predominantly spiritual

realms, the devotee ultimately reaches the highest and absolute stage of Satnam, the True Name, and Anami, the Nameless. This is the method that carries one to the very top of all creation, beyond all duality and relativity, beyond good and evil, and above all ignorance and delusion.

Shabd literally means 'word' or 'sound'. Ordinarily, *shabd* (शब्द) refers to any kind of word or sound or a religious song or hymn; but in mystic language and as a technical term, Shabd refers to a subtle transcendent power which resounds in all planes above the eyes and transports us to the highest regions. This Shabd is not ordinary sound, for sound cannot exist where the medium of air is absent; while this spiritual, transcendent sound reverberates throughout all high stages, where there is no air and no material object.

In a well-known dialogue in the *Adi Granth*, the *siddha yogis* (yogis who have attained miraculous powers) ask Guru Nanak:

ਸੁ ਸਬਦ ਕਾ ਕਹਾ ਵਾਸੁ ਕਬੀਅਲੇ ਜਿਤੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਭਵਜਲੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੋ ॥
ਤ੍ਰੈ ਸਤ ਅੰਗੁਲ ਵਾਈ ਕਹੀਐ ਤਿਸੁ ਕਹੁ ਕਵਨੁ ਅਧਾਰੋ ॥

Where doth that Shabd abide
Which taketh us across the ocean of the world?
Ten kinds of prana we have;
On which doth it depend?

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.944

Then the Guru answers:

ਸੁ ਸਬਦ ਕਉ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ ਅਲਖੰ ਜਹ ਦੇਖਾ ਤਹ ਸੋਈ ॥
ਪਵਨ ਕਾ ਵਾਸਾ ਸੁੰਨ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ਅਕਲ ਕਲਾ ਧਰ ਸੋਈ ॥

* In pranayam, the yogic system of breath control, prana (vital air) is subdivided into five major and five minor pranas, the "ten kinds of prana" mentioned here, which have specific functions in the physical body.

That Shabd abides within;
 Transcendent, I behold it wherever I look.
 The source of all prana is in Sunn,
 But Shabd does not depend on any thing.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.944

Earlier, we stated that there are two main kinds of mystic practice: *varnatmak*, relating to words (ਵਰਨਾਤਮਕ), and *dhunatmak*, relating to the inner sound (ਸੁਨਿਆਤਮਕ). The Shabd practice belongs to the second kind, which is beyond writing and speech. It is called *ajapa jaap* (ਅਜਪਾ ਜਾਪ), Unutterable Utterance; and *akath katha* (ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ), Untellable Tale. Guru Nanak calls it *baani* (ਬਾਣੀ), Word; *gurbaani* (ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ), Guru's Word; *sach* (ਸੱਚ), Truth; or *naam* (ਨਾਮ), Name. In the Bible, it is called the Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
 and the Word was God.

BIBLE, JOHN 1:1

In the Vedas, it is termed *naad* (नाद), Sound; or *aakaash vaani* (आकाश वाणी), Heavenly Voice. Muslim mystics call it *kalima* (كَلِمَة), Word; *kalaam-i Ilaahi* (كَلَامِ اَلّٰهِي), the Word of God; *nida-i aasmaani* (نِدَاءِ آسمَانِي), Heavenly Sound; or *ism-i azam* (اِسْمِ اَعْظَم), the Greatest Name.

This spiritual sound current, the Logos, the Divine Harmony, the Heavenly Music or the Music of the Spheres, emanates from the absolute Supreme Being and creates and sustains all planes and universes. If we compare the absolute Lord to an ocean of spirituality and transcendence, and our soul to a drop of it, then this spiritual current may be called a vast river which flows out of that ocean and waters all the regions below.

Shabd is God's unwritten law, his unspoken language, his inexpressible word; it is his essence, his being, his very self. Shabd

reverberates in all planes and is the source of all life and the fountainhead of all consciousness. It is the omnipresent form of God. As, in essence, the soul and Shabd are one, it draws the soul upwards as a magnet attracts a needle. Therefore, this method is called Surat Shabd Yoga (सुरत शब्द योग), union of the *surat*, soul, with the transcendent Shabd. By listening to that internal music God is truly known, and then all external worship appears futile.

نغمہ نیک شنیدم و ندا ہوا وافر کعبہ و بیت خانہ سبز دم شد ہر دو کافر

Many kinds of music and melody did I hear,
And then to me temple and mosque,
Both became heretic.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 21:1*

Rumi tells us to take our soul to the firmament of the eye centre and then listen to the music of Shabd coming from above.

چرخ را در زیر پا آرا اے شجاع بشنوا ز فوق فلک بانگ سماع

Bring the firmament under thy feet,
O thou brave one,
And listen thou to the melodious song
Coming from the heaven above.

RUMI, *MASNAVI II:1942*

بشنوی یک کلام نامقطوع از حدوث و فنا بود مر فروع

Listen thou to the Eternal Speech
That transcendeth birth and death.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELVI*, p.90

Without coming into contact with that eternal music, we cannot go out of the whirlwind of phenomena.

सबद बिना सुति आँधरी, कहो कहाँ को जाय ।
द्वार न पावै सबद का, फिरि फिरि भटका खाय ॥

Without Shabd blind is our soul;
Say, where can it go?
Not finding the door of Shabd,
It wandereth astray again and again.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.93:15

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਤਾ ਕਰਮਿ ਬਿਧਾਤਾ ॥
ਜੁਗ ਚਾਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਤਾ ॥

The devotee of Guru knoweth the divine Lord;
In all the four yugas by Guru's Shabd is he known.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1054-55

ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੇ ॥

By Surat Shabd do thou cross
The ocean of phenomena,
By uttering his Name, O Nanak.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.938

ਸਾਕਤ ਨਰਿ ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਕਿਉ ਪਾਈਐ ॥
ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਆਈਐ ਜਾਈਐ ॥

How can the worldly minded find Surat Shabd?
Without Surat Shabd one keepeth coming and going.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1042

Through Shabd alone can we know the absolute Lord, and
Shabd can be had by performing Surat Shabd Yoga with the help

of the mystic adept. Guru is, of course, essential for any realization and success in this method. It is a path of devotion, *bhakti maarg*; it is devotion to the Satguru that enables the devotee to effect an entry into the third eye focus and to catch hold of the transcendent Shabd, which is the real inner essence or being of the Guru, for he has merged his individuality in the universality, the eternal Shabd, and thus become one with God.

a. Essential factors in Surat Shabd Yoga

Three things are therefore needed for training in this mystic school:

- Satsang (सत्संग): being in the company and listening to the discourses of true mystics.
- Satguru (सतगुरु): devotion to a contemporary mystic adept.
- Shabd (शब्द): initiation into the secrets of the sound current by the Guru.

By satsang we begin to feel the need of a living Guru of Shabd Yoga and, when we find such a Guru and give him our devotion, he unites our soul internally with Shabd.

b. Three parts of this method

There are thus three steps in this method:

1. Simran (सिमरन): repetition of the holy name or names given by the Guru at initiation, to concentrate our attention on the third eye focus.
2. Dhyān (ध्यान): contemplation of the radiant, astral form of the Guru at the third eye to train the soul to stay there.
3. Bhajan (भजन): listening to the Shabd internally, which will transport the soul to higher spiritual regions.

This third is the real practice; the first two are preliminary steps. Without coming into contact with the transcendent Shabd we cannot go beyond karmas, beyond good and evil, beyond relativity and duality, beyond birth and death, beyond the sphere of maya or phenomena, into absolute reality.

This subtle method is the most effective, the most direct and has the highest reach. Moreover, unlike pranayam, which is an artificial method, it is natural, within everyone. It can neither be altered, nor changed, nor modified. It is universal. As compared with other practices, it is so easy that all human beings can follow it, from a child of five to an aged person of ninety, without any distinction of caste, creed, colour, country, nationality, religion or position. The light of truth is within everyone, and anyone who tries to find it by this method under the guidance of a Perfect Guru can achieve it.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 7:7

As this is such an important method, it shall be dealt with at length in Part Four. This is the method which all can adopt: *grihasthi* (गृहस्थी), householder, as well as *tyaagi* (त्यागी), renouncer; the educated as well as the uneducated; men and women, all without any obstruction or hitch. What is wanted is keenness and the guidance of a perfect contemporary Satguru.

c. Four rates of speed in mystic ascent

There are four rates of speed in the mystic ascent of the soul.

(1) *In Pind* (पिण्ड): In this region, the six physical centres of the material creation, the speed is very slow and is called *cheeti maarg* (चीटी मार्ग), the path of the ant, because the ant moves slowly

and can slowly separate sugar particles from sand. Similarly, in Pind the conscious current is very slowly separated from the body and drawn up into the third eye by simran or repetition.

(2) *In And* (अण्ड): In this region, the astral plane, the speed is less slow and is called *makri maarg* (मकड़ी मार्ग), the path of the spider, because the spider comes down from the ceiling with the thread of its web and then slowly goes up again by the same thread. Similarly, in the astral regions the soul goes up and comes down with the current of inner sound or light.

(3) *In Brahmāṇḍ* (ब्रह्माण्ड): In this region, the causal-spiritual realms below Sach Khand, the speed is fast, and is called *meen maarg* (मीन मार्ग), the path of the fish, because the fish cannot bear separation from water and it is also able to ascend along a current of water falling from above. Similarly, the soul gets inseparably united with Shabd at the stage of Parbrahm beyond the causal region, and can easily go up and come down with the current of Shabd.

(4) *In Sat Lok or Sach Khand* (सच्चिदानन्द): In this region, which the Muslim mystics call Maqam-i Haq (مقام حق), the region of Truth, the ultimate, absolute spirituality of the speed is the fastest and is called *bihangam maarg* (बिहंगम मार्ग), the path of the bird, because the soul at that level of consciousness is like a bird that flies from the plains and in an instant reaches the top of the mountain, and then flies down and reaches the plains in an instant. The person who has reached Sach Khand can collect the soul in the third eye and transport it in no time into Sach Khand and bring it back in no time into the body at will.

One who finds access into the astral plane acquires the method of the spider. One who goes above Brahm or Om into Parbrahm, the causal-spiritual planes, acquires the method of the fish. But

the greatest mystics who go into the highest spiritual stages of Sach Khand and Anami acquire the speed of the bird. These terms indicate, however, four rates of speed relative to one another; the fastest thing in the physical world is light or electricity, but the speed of pranas is faster, that of mind is still faster and that of the soul is so fast that even to call it speed would be wrong.

***d. Jyoti-jot (ज्योति जेत), union with the Lord
in different mystic schools***

The final stage, *jyoti-jot* – the merging of the light of soul, *jyoti*, in the Supreme Light, *jot* – where the individual is presumed to become one with God, is different for different mystic schools.

(1) *Pranayam yogis (योगी)*: These yogis go up to Chidakash in Niranjana Desh and stop there. Hence, they look upon the sixth centre of the material creation as the highest level of human experience and Niranjana as God. Their *jyoti-jot* is there, in the astral plane or the first stage of the materio-spiritual creation.

(2) *Yogishwar gyanis (योगीश्वर)*: These yogis go up to Brahm or Om, and not beyond. Hence, for them, Niranjana is the highest level of human experience and Brahm is God. Their *jyoti-jot* is there, in the causal region – the second stage and the top of materio-spiritual creation.

(3) *Sadh mystics (साध)*: Sadh mystics go up to Parabrahm, a predominantly spiritual region. Hence, for them Brahm is the highest level of human experience, Parabrahm is God, and their *jyoti-jot* is in Parabrahm.

(4) *Sant mystics (सन्त)*: The Surat Shabd saints go up to Sat Lok and Anami. Therefore, Parabrahm is the highest level of human experience and God is Sat Purush. Hence, their *jyoti-jot* is

in Sat Lok or Maqam-i Haq and Anami Desh, but not below Sat Lok. That is the real and true *jjyoti-jot*; for our soul is a drop of the ocean of Satnam, and by merging in that ocean alone can it find eternal salvation and attain the deepest bliss, truest knowledge and highest love. So, our ideal in life should be to reach that highest stage and to be one with the final, ultimate absolute.



CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion of Part Three: Reflections on the Mystic Essence of Religion

1 The mystic essence of religion

a. Origin of religions

It seems that most religions were originally mystic schools but when in the course of time true and practical mystics disappeared, the mystic practice was also dropped; for in addition to being difficult and tasteless in the beginning, such practices cannot possibly be performed without help from a living adept. As already pointed out, the essential factor in a mystic school is the mystic adept; he is the very life and soul of the institution. There can be no mystic school without a Guru. The existence and efficacy of a mystic practice depends on the presence and effectiveness of the adept; it is the mystic who makes a mystic school. Therefore, when the line or chain of true mystics comes to an end, that school ceases to be mystic; it becomes a common religion.

b. Religions are dead mystic schools

The founders of almost all religions were mystics, but now true and practical mystics are extremely rare among our religious

teachers and leaders. Instead of the inward ascent of the soul and worship of the living God in his transcendent being on subtle spiritual planes, people have taken to outward rites and ceremonies.

When, along with real mystics, the mystic practice disappears, what remains in the school is mere theory. At that time the followers of that school base their faith not on their own transcendent realization and transport, as the original mystic followers did, but on the writings of earlier mystics. For tenets of their belief, they depend entirely on books and tradition.

This dependence on books leaves religion at the mercy of individual interpretation, which involves difference, discussion and discord. Words half reveal and half conceal the ideas they are meant to convey, for we cannot help looking at them from our own point of view. We see them in the light of our own thoughts and prejudices; we read them through the glasses of our own past experience. And when our past experience contains nothing of mystic realization and transport, we remain at a loss to understand mystic phraseology.

c. Only mystics can understand other mystics and explain the teachings

Without the help and guidance of a living mystic adept, a layperson can hardly make out the real meaning of mystic books. Thus, we require a living Guru, not only for inner spiritual mystic realization but even for understanding the writings of earlier mystics. Just as a layperson cannot follow advanced books on any science, for they are written in technical language, similarly the uninitiated cannot understand books of mysticism, for there also we have technical phraseology. For intellectual understanding as well as for inner spiritual realization, the mystic adept is indispensable.

2 Supremacy of Shabd Yoga or Sawt-i Sarmadi

We have seen that there are several mystic practices in the world, all of which aim at unveiling the hidden mystery of the universe, but that none is perfect except Shabd Yoga or Sawt-i Sarmadi, the practice of listening to the eternal inner Sound, which takes us to the very final stage of ultimate reality. Other practices leave us along the way.

What the rishis of old achieved through long and arduous practices extending over hundreds of years, as stated in their ancient books, mystics of Shabd Yoga may attain in a few months and without unnecessarily straining and torturing the physical frame. Moreover, the rishis even then could not reach the highest plane, which is our true home and into which access can be obtained only through Shabd Yoga.

Shabd has a natural attraction or affinity for the soul, and is a straight road to God; other practices do not take us to the ultimate spiritual realm because their vehicle is not purely spiritual. Shabd is a purely spiritual power, and consequently it can provide access into purely spiritual regions. One who is initiated properly into the mysteries of Shabd by a perfect adept may easily scale those spiritual heights, which are inaccessible to mystics of other schools.

धरती अरु असमान बिचि, दोइ तूँबड़ा अबध ।
षट दरसन संसै पड़्या, अरु चौरासी सिध ॥

On the earth and in the heavens, much confusion
Has arisen from these two, O Kabir;
The six schools (of Hindu philosophy) are in doubt,
As also are the eighty-four *siddhas* (perfected beings).

KABIR, *KABIR SAMAGRA*, P.307:11

Each of the six schools looks at reality from its own angle of vision, and its view is therefore one-sided. Moreover, it is not free from the colour of maya or phenomena. Similarly, the three gods of Hinduism are in delusion and egoism:

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹਾਦੇਉ ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਰੋਗੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਈ ॥
ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਏ ਤਿਸਹਿ ਨ ਚੇਤਹਿ ਬਪੁੜੇ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਈ ॥

Diseased are the three gunas,
Diseased are Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev (Shiva);
In egoism do they act.
Him who created them they remember not;
For through devotion to the Guru alone is he known.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.735

Even the ten incarnations could not reach the absolute Lord.

ਦਸ ਅਉਤਾਰ ਰਾਜੇ ਹੋਏ ਵਰਤੇ ਮਹਾਦੇਵ ਅਉਧੂਤਾ ॥
ਤਿਨ੍ ਭੀ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ਤੇਰਾ ਲਾਇ ਥਕੇ ਬਿਭੂਤਾ ॥

The ten incarnations of Vishnu who lived here as kings,
And Shiva, when he incarnated as an ascetic
And kept his body besmeared with ashes –
Even they could not know Thy transcendent being.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.747

The ten incarnations are not incarnations of the final stage, Sat Lok (सत् लोक), which is our true home, but of lower stages up to Om (ओम्) or Brahm (ब्रह्म). As already said, Brahm is at the top of the materio-spiritual creation but does not have access to the purely spiritual planes. He is not the final God or our true Father. We have come from Sat Lok, our true home, the ultimate

absolute, access into which can be had only through Shabd Yoga. All below it is delusion, whether subtle or gross. Thus, Sat Lok, the goal of Shabd Yoga mystics, is beyond Brahm or Om.

राम ब्रह्म से वह पद आगे । चौथा लोक संत जहाँ लागे ॥
नानक और कबीर बखाना । तुलसी साहेब निज कर जाना ॥
उनकी वाणी वह पद गावे । सच्चखंड सत्त लोक लखावे ॥

Beyond Ram and Brahm is that stage,
The fourth realm, where Sant mystics reach.
Nanak and Kabir mention it;
Tulsi Sahib looketh on it as his home.
Their writings sing of that stage
And point to Sach Khand or Sat Lok.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 24:1:121-123*

That final stage, Sach Khand (सच्चखण्ड), Sat Lok (सत्त लोक) or Maqam-i Haq (مقام حق), 'the place of transcendent truth', is called the fourth realm because it is beyond the three *loks* or worlds of the material and materio-spiritual creation: Pind (पिण्ड), And (अण्ड) and Brahmand (ब्रह्माण्ड).

3 Kal (काल) and Dayal (दयाल)

We can look at this matter from another point of view also. There are two kinds of power in the world, positive and negative. The positive power belongs to the highest spiritual stages: Sat Lok (सत्त लोक) or Anami (अनामी); and the negative belongs to Brahm (ब्रह्म) or Om (ओम्), who is the ruler of Brahmand, this universe of ours characterized by time and duality.

The higher positive essence of God is named Dayal (दयाल), The Merciful, because he is all grace and mercy; the lower negative

power is termed Kal (काल), Time, who is perfectly just, who rewards and punishes us for our deeds in this world, and who is a reality of a second order. His distinct existence is within the sphere of delusion, relativity and change.

Many prophets and incarnations come from Kal and work within his power. Their object is to improve the state of affairs in this world of Kal but not to take souls out of this delusion. Their reform is internal, with reference only to Kal's realm of justice, punishment and reward.

Mystic adepts of Shabd Yoga, on the other hand, come from Dayal or Akal, 'beyond Kal (Time)'. Consequently, they do not set themselves to reform the lower worlds as the incarnations do, but to take us out of the sphere of Kal (Time) altogether and bring us to the realm of Dayal, which is our true home of pure and lasting bliss, absolute knowledge and divine love.

a. The world as a prison

This whole universe of ours, which is the world of Kal, is a big prison which has many rooms and cells in it. The master of the prison is Kal and we are all prisoners. Our true home is with Dayal in Sat Lok. Now Kal does not want any soul to escape from his prison and return back home, although he desires perpetual reform going on within his prison. To that end, he sends incarnations, prophets, and moral, social and political reformers, who all try to set his world right.

But since these reformers are the agents of Kal (Time), they act within his power and do his work of reform within the prison. They do not tell us of our real home in the absolute; they hardly know of it themselves. Shabd mystics, on the other hand, come from outside the prison and liberate us from Kal's thralldom for good. It is with their help and grace that we leave delusion and darkness forever, and reach our true home.

b. Prison cells as forms of life

To understand this simile thoroughly, we must know what the various rooms in the prison are. They house the multifarious kinds of life we see in this universe of Kal (Time). Some lives and forms of life are bad and wretched, like those of beasts of burden, low insects and other animals, which are represented in the prison by dark cells and dungeons where prisoners are given hard labour. Higher kinds of life inhabit the *swarg* (heaven) (स्वर्ग) of the Hindus, the *bahisht* (بَهِسْت) of the Muslims, or the heaven of the Christians, and may be compared to those rooms in the prison which are well furnished and meant for A-class prisoners.

In the A-class cells, there is every kind of comfort. They are equipped with electric lights and fans, with libraries and dining halls, so to speak. We have also servants to wait on us, and all other comforts and facilities, but we are still prisoners; we cannot go home. Moreover, when our term in this cell expires, we will be thrown back into dirty cells again.

Some prisoners are being punished severely, and that is our hell. All go on moving from one room to another according to one's actions, but no action of ours can take us out of the prison. Now in one room, now in another, we pass our days of imprisonment without knowing or remembering that our true home is somewhere else.

This cycle goes on in the dominions of Kal (Time); there is no true peace here. Even the so-called *mukti* (मुक्ति) or salvation of this place is merely a room in this vast prison, and not our true home of permanent rest and peace. As stated in the Vedas and other religious books, we have to come back even from this salvation, although after the duration of a vastly extended period. We may be allowed to enjoy the comfort of a room for a very long time, but in the end we will have to vacate it and come back to some wretched cell.

c. Reforming the prison

Now who are our various reformers? They are fellow prisoners who are ignorant of their true and abiding home with God and who consequently want to improve their present dwelling. Political and social reformers merely whitewash our cell and make other improvements within our dungeon. They do not try to take us into a better room even within the prison. Political reforms are an attempt to improve the physical world only; they do not touch higher subtler planes even within Kal's dominions, such as the astral and causal regions. Considered in the light of the whole cosmological scheme of creation, such work is not of much use; it is very narrow, limited, short-sighted and superficial, for we have very soon to leave that cell and go into another. Why spend so much time trying to improve it?

The work of prophets and incarnations, on the other hand, is much better. They do not lay stress on improving our present cell but teach us the method of going into a better room in the prison. They tell us how we can go into *swarg* (स्वर्ग) or *bahisht* (بهشت), 'heaven'. They tell us how we can leave this cell, the physical world, and go into a well-furnished and fully equipped room, giving us *mukti* (मुक्ति), 'salvation' from our present life.

Nevertheless, all these are the agents of Kal (Time) and they keep us within the sphere of delusion; they do not take us out of the prison, they do not transport us to our true eternal home in Sat Lok. Incarnations and even some of the prophets thus serve the purposes of Kal, the master of the prison. They come from age to age to reform lower cells and take prisoners into higher rooms, but the reform is internal and within the prison; they do not set us free. We are deceived by them, for we think that they come to take us to our Father in the highest realm beyond good and evil, which is our home, but in fact they keep us within the prison. Incarnations and prophets do their work of reform in the

prison, much like state officials – they move about with decorum, they come to promote good and root out evil – but their sphere of activity is within relativity, delusion and time.

d. The books of law

Thus, incarnations come into the world from time to time for establishing righteousness, protecting the good and destroying the wicked. Their reform is within the sphere of morality; they do not take us to the absolute Dayal, who neither rewards nor punishes, who sees neither our goodness nor badness because good and evil, being relative, do not exist there, and who is beyond all relativity and delusion. Lord Krishna says of himself:

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो
लोकान्समार्हर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥

Time am I, world-destroying;
Grown mature, engaged here
in subduing the world.
Even without thee (thy action),
All the warriors standing arrayed
In the opposing armies shall cease to be.

THE BHAGAVADGITA, XI:32

The merciful Dayal never makes himself manifest to kill; he is merciful to all; he is an ocean of mercy. Shabd mystics come from that high stage which is our true home, far outside the prison; they alone can take us back to that blissful abode. Even incarnations who serve humanity as the agents of Kal (Time) concern themselves only with the prison.

कालादृचः समभवन् यजुः कालाद जायत ॥

Kal created the *Rig Veda*,
And Kal produced the *Yajur Veda*.

ATHARV VEDA XIX:54:3

Therefore, these books give us the law of Kal (Time), which binds us to the prison. Free people are beyond this law and they are Shabd mystics. The revealed books want us to give up bad actions and embrace good ones, but they do not tell us how to go beyond both good and evil, how to transcend the bounds of morality and the law of karmas. If bad actions are iron shackles, good ones are gold chains; still they are chains and fetters that bind us to the prison of time and change.

The Vedas deal chiefly with *karam kaand* (कर्मकाण्ड), 'actions, rites and ceremonies'. By following the direction and instruction of the Vedas, we can never escape from the chain of karmas; rather we get all the more entangled in them. And this remark applies to the rituals of all religions.

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रेगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

The Vedas deal with the three gunas or qualities;
Be thou above these three gunas, O Arjuna,
And be thou beyond the pairs of opposites,
Ever steadfast in truth, careless of possessions,
And full of the soul or self (*aatman*).

BHAGAVAD GITA II:45

यावानर्थं उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

All the Vedas are as useful
 To an enlightened Brahman (mystic)
 As is a pool in a place all covered over with water.

BHAGAVAD GITA II:46

In a place all covered over with water, a pool is useless. The Vedas keep us within the sphere of action, but what we want is to go beyond all action, to go out of the prison altogether; we want to reach our true home in the bosom of the Absolute. We are souls or spirits, and our ocean is the transcendent Supreme Being. We, the drops, cannot have true and lasting peace unless we reach our ocean; our fundamental problems are not fully solved below that stage.

e. Liberators of the imprisoned

The region of Kal (Time) is in delusion; we want to go beyond delusion or phenomena. Within the prison of Kal, the process of moving from room to room must go on; we want to be out of the cycle of birth and death, beyond causation and relativity, and above all duality and opposites. We want light to behold the face of the transcendent Absolute; we want liberation from the fetters of karmas and the enslavement of desire. For that we must go to Shabd mystics. They alone come from outside the prison, from home; they alone can take us out of this imprisonment and bondage.

ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸਿ ਹੈ ਬਾਧਾ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ॥ ...
 ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ਲੈ ਦਰਗਹ ਲਏ ਛਡਾਇ ॥

In Kal's control is the whole universe,
 Bound by worldly attachment....
 From the mystic adept take thou the treasure of Nam
 That shall on the judgement day liberate thee.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.162

Kal and Maya have everyone in their grip – human beings, gods, angels and all.

ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹੇ ਦੇਵੀ ਸਭਿ ਦੇਵਾ ॥
ਕਾਲੁ ਨ ਛੋਡੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ॥

Allured by Maya are all gods and goddesses.
Without service to Guru,
Kal relinquisheth not his hold on thee.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.227

In Maha Sunn (ਸਹਾ ਜੁਨ) above Parbrahm, the negative power is termed Maha Kal. It is difficult to get out of the clutches of Kal and Maha Kal, but if we take shelter with the Perfect Guru, they can do nothing.

ਕਾਲੁ ਬਿਕਾਲੁ ਭਏ ਦੇਵਾਨੇ ਮਨੁ ਰਾਖਿਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਠਾਏ ॥

Kal and Maha Kal are dazed,
For the Guru hath put my mind under control.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.764

ਕਾਲੁ ਬਿਕਾਲੁ ਕਹੇ ਕਹਿ ਬਪੁਰੇ ਜੀਵਤ ਮੁਆ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਰੀ ॥

What can poor Kal and Maha Kal do,
When by dying while living
Hath the mind been curbed?

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.907

Sat Purush himself created Kal (who is like a drop of him) and gave him the sovereignty of the three worlds: physical, astral and causal.

ਤੂੰ ਵਰਤਾਇ ਚਉਥੈ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ॥
ਕਾਲ ਬਿਕਾਲ ਕੀਏ ਇਕ ਗ੍ਰਾਸਾ ॥

Three worlds he manifested,
But himself resideth in the fourth realm.
Kal and Maha Kal are but one morsel of his.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1038

ਖੰਡ ਪਤਾਲ ਦੀਪ ਸਭਿ ਲੋਆ ॥ ਸਭਿ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸਿ ਆਪਿ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਕੀਆ ॥
ਨਿਹਚਲ ਏਕੁ ਆਪਿ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਸੋ ਨਿਹਚਲ ਜੋ ਤਿਸਹਿ ਧਿਆਇਦਾ ॥

Heaven, the netherworld, all sections of the universe
The Lord hath himself put all under the control of Kal.
Eternal, everlasting is he alone,
And who meditateth on him, he too becometh eternal.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1076

Shabd mystics of the absolute Satnam stage become as eternal as Satnam himself, and they make their devotees as eternal too. To all appearances, they live like ordinary people. They feel for the poor prisoners and therefore descend into the material creation to lift the ignorant up into light and life, and to carry the wandering back to their eternal home.

ਜਿਨਿ ਤੁਮ ਭੇਜੇ ਤਿਨਹਿ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜ ਸੇਤੀ ਘਰਿ ਆਉ ॥

The one who sent you to this world
Has now recalled you;
Return home with peace and joy.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.678

Sahaj is a transcendent stage in the purely spiritual realms of Sat Lok.

ਤਿਹੁ ਗੁਣਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇ ॥ ...
ਚਉਥੇ ਪਦ ਮਹਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਲੈ ਪਇ ॥

In the three gunas (qualities) *sahaj* cannot be attained,
For in delusion are the three gunas....
In the fourth realm is *sahaj*,
And the devotee of the Guru alone attaineth it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.68

Thus, *sahaj* is in the fourth realm, Sach Khand (ਸਚ ਖੰਡ) or Sat Lok (सत्त लोक). We originally came from that spiritual stage but have now forgotten all about it.

یادگن چچ کہ یادت ناید از مقامات خوش روحانی
چوں فراموش شده است آنجا جرم خیره و سرگردانی

Recollect thou that which is from
The blissful spiritual realms,
But which cometh not into thy memory.
Since those realms thou hast forgotten,
Hence art thou helpless and bewildered.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.385

ببالاں رو براں خضر اکہ بودی دریں درانہ ہا بسیار گشتی

Go thou up into the meadows where first thou wert;
For long enough hast thou wandered in this wilderness.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.401

This physical creation is a wilderness, for the soul's meadows and gardens are in the absolute stage of pure spirituality.

دریں خاکستر ہستی چہ غلطی براں نسرین و کانوں شوکہ بودی

Wherefore art thou rolling in this earthly existence?
 Go thou into those orchards and gardens
 Where thou hast been.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.404

Thus, Shabd mystics invite us up into the blissful mansions of our true Lord. We are all prisoners of Kal, of Time, but they are free people; they come from home to take us back to our Heavenly Father. They mix with the prisoners and feel for them; they bring them not dread but the message of love. They are oceans of love; they love all people, good and bad, righteous and unrighteous. Whoever falls at their feet with love and devotion is saved and taken out of the prison. Such is their grace and mercy.

But alas! We do not recognize them, for they live in great humility. They are in their humility sublime. Just as the highest stars are invisible while the near ones look very big, similarly these highest mystics remain invisible to the common people, who ignorantly consider ordinary reformers as the highest beings. Political and social reformers make a name in the world and become gods for the masses, but in their own day great mystics and spiritually high personages are neither recognized nor followed except by a few. This is our extreme ill luck.

4 Shabd is our aeroplane

a. Easy, quick and safe

Shabd Yoga is comparatively the easiest of all mystic practices; its effect becomes manifest much quicker, and the result is much greater and grander. In this method, there is no unnecessary strain on the body, and every person, young or old, man or woman, married or unmarried, householder or recluse, without any distinction of caste, creed, or colour, can perform it successfully. It is not like pranayam and other practices which are beset with danger. From a child of

five to an old person of ninety, it can be adopted by all without any distinction of position in society or intellectual attainments.

It has no outward forms or ceremonies, no rites or rituals; it only requires true devotion and eagerness on our part, and the grace of a perfect adept. If we are sincerely and earnestly desirous of finding the ultimate Supreme Lord, then out of his unbounded mercy, the adept will take us into his fold and transport us to higher spheres.

b. Universal and natural

Shabd Yoga is a universal and natural method. Anyone may follow it without giving up his caste and creed, without altering his social life and position and without neglecting his worldly activities and duties, for nothing is to be brought here from outside. Shabd is already in everyone, and so is soul. All treasures are within us and meant for us. They are ours. To get them, our soul has only to be brought into contact with Shabd, and this can be done by a perfect adept. The inner path of Shabd is designed by nature, by God himself, and can neither be changed, nor altered, nor modified by human beings. In all times, it remains the same. It is an internal method of realization of reality open to all who care to have it.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 7:7

c. Not the monopoly of any one religion

Shabd is not the monopoly of any one religion or creed. It is mentioned in the books of all religions, but religions are unaware of it. We may belong to any religion whatsoever, but if we get this Shabd from a perfect adept we shall certainly reach the ultimate stage of pure and transcendent spirituality and absolute reality.

As already stated, religions are more or less social and moral institutions. For purely spiritual ascent we need Shabd Yoga, transcendent union through the Sound. A mystic school is not a religion, for people of different religions may belong to it. In fact there is no quarrel between religion and mysticism; they work in their own spheres. Religion is useful for social and moral work; mysticism is indispensable for spiritual realization and transcendent insight.

d. Best suited to this age

The mystics speak of different practices for the four different ages, with Shabd as the right path to be adopted by true seekers now. It is easy, safe, quick and sure. Further, it is the only practice that transports us out of Kal's dominions into our true home in Sat Lok. Moreover, above all, it is best suited to this age of Kaliyug, when other practices like pranayam are not practicable:

ਅਬ ਕਲੁ ਆਇਓ ਰੇ ॥ ਇਕੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਬੋਵਹੁ ਬੋਵਹੁ ॥
ਅਨ ਰੂਤਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Kaliyug hath come, oh, it hath come;
Sow ye Nam, oh, sow ye!
No season is it for other practices.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1185

Sowing of Nam, as explained at length earlier, means performing Shabd Yoga; this is the proper practice for modern times.

5 Recapitulation and conclusion:

The efficacy of Shabd

Of all mystic practices, we would naturally like to follow the one that may be most efficacious and that may lead us to the highest

stage of spiritual transcendence, beyond all delusion and phenomena. Only Shabd Yoga can do that; other practices leave us along the way, for their instrument of transport is not purely spiritual.

In the highly spiritual realms, nothing finds access except the spirit, or things transcendently spiritual. Shabd alone is a purely spiritual and transcendent power, and consequently Shabd alone can take us to the very heart of ultimate absolute reality. Pranas, which are the organs of pranayam and other mystic practices, are not purely spiritual. They are not so subtle as spirit, and consequently they cannot ascend beyond the astral and causal regions to the purely spiritual realms. And as we ascend by means of prana in pranayam and other mystic practices, we too stop wherever they come to a standstill. For access into purely spiritual regions, we must ride on the purely spiritual power of Shabd.

What Shabd is and how we come into contact with it, we shall see in detail in the next part of the book, Part Four; but this much is plain: that Shabd Yoga, out of all mystic practices, is the quickest, safest, surest and of highest reach. This is the mystic practice for seekers and keen investigators who desire an insight into transcendent secrets: they can carry on their research in the laboratory of their own body. It is open to all, it is within all; all who desire and are keen can get it. But the key to transport is with the perfect adept. Without a competent teacher of our own day, we can do nothing in this line. A living Guru is the most essential factor.

PART FOUR

Shabd Yoga

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1 Three stages in mystic development

All who are interested in mysticism are not practical mystics. Mystically inclined people may be divided into three classes:

- Those who talk of high mystic philosophy but do not follow the mystic practice
- Those who do the mystic practice and to some extent enjoy transport and get glimpses of reality, but have not made a home in the transcendent realms
- Those who have attained the stage of the ultimate absolute and made a permanent home there

The first kind of people do not come within the fold of mysticism proper, but lie on the borderline; the second kind are on the way but have not reached the final goal; the third are perfect mystic adepts who have realized union with the transcendent absolute and have become the ultimate God themselves.

Alternatively, we can say that there are three stages in mystic development and inner spiritual realization:

a. Talking, *kathni* (कथनी)

This is talking of mystic knowledge without having attained it by inner enlightenment.

b. Action, *karni* (करनी)

This is doing the mystic practice with zeal and earnestness and putting one's heart into it. This leads to inner enlightenment and spiritual realization of transcendent truths.

Kathni is easy and pleasant, for everyone likes to talk like a great mystic, but *karni* is difficult and hard. Without *karni*, however, mere talking is of little avail, for it is actually doing the mystic practice that brings one true transcendent knowledge and bliss.

कथनी तजि करनी करै, तो विष से अमृत होय ॥

Talking is sweet as sugar, doing is bitter as gall;
Leave aside talking if takest thou to doing;
Then from poison wouldst thou become nectar.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.78:1

c. Living, *rahni* (रहनी)

Living in the higher spiritual planes is the final stage in mysticism and is attained only after one has so thoroughly mastered the second stage that one has made a home in the subtle spiritual realms. Mystics of this highest stage live in the upper regions of transcendent spirituality and come into the body only at that time during the day when they have to deal with people of this world.

The great mystic Kabir says:

करनी करै सो पुत्र हमारा, कथनी कथै सो नाती ।
रहनी रहै सो गुरु हमारा, हम रहनी के साथी ॥

Who treadeth the mystic path,
He is dear to me as my child;

Who talketh of it, he is a distant relative;
 But who liveth there in transcendence,
 He is verily my Guru.
 I am with him who liveth there.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.78:10

One who lives in those transcendent realms goes beyond delusion and becomes the Lord and master of the whole universe.

ਦਸਵੈ ਦੁਆਰਿ ਰਹਤ ਕਰੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਇ ॥

Who maketh his home in Daswan Dwar
 Knoweth all the three worlds.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.490

ਖਾਟ ਤੁਲਾਇੰ ਦਸਵੇਂ ਫ਼ਾਰ। ਤਹਾਂ ਕਰੁੰ ਬਿਸਾਮਾ ॥

My bed and bedding are in Daswan Dwar;
 There do I repose.

KABIR, REFERENCE NOT AVAILABLE

This Daswan Dwar refers to the predominantly spiritual stage of Parbrahm, where Shabd mystics repose. At this plane between *ida* and *pingala* (also called Ganges and Yamuna), Kabir Sahib says he has made his residence and he asks rishis and munis, who are below Brahm, to find the way to this higher stage of pure spirituality.

ਗੰਗ ਜਮੁਨ ਤਰ ਅੰਤਰੈ, ਸਹਜ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਲਯੈ ਘਾਟ ॥
 ਤਹਾ ਕਬੀਰੈ ਮਠ ਰਚ੍ਯਾ, ਮੁਨਿ ਜਨ ਜੀਵੈ ਭਾਟ ॥

Between Ganges and Yamuna
 Is the plane of Sahaj Sunn;

There hath Kabir made his residence.
Seek the path, O ye munis.

KABIR, *KABIR SAMAGRA*, P.253

Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh tells his disciples to make their home in the spiritual planes.

ਉਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਕਾ ਚੇਰਾ ॥

Who liveth in transcendent realms,
He is my true disciple;
Nay, he is my Lord and I am his slave.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *REHATNAME*, P.53

But without the Guru and the mystic practice we cannot attain this stage.

शब्द और सूरत भये एका । नाम धुन आत्मक देखा ॥
गुरु बिन और बिना करनी । मिले कस कहो यह रहनी ॥

When Shabd and soul become one,
Dhunaत्मक Nam is seen.
Save through Guru and practice,
Say, how can one attain this living?

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*, 10:1:11-12

Some people are under the impression that mysticism makes one lazy and inactive, but in fact it is just the other way. Mysticism is meant for the brave, and it makes people brave and active. However, the work and activity of great mystics is not confined to the physical plane; it is rather chiefly in the higher planes.

Shabd mystics dive deep into the ocean of existence and fathom the very bottom of reality. They have opened their inner

eyes and they see; they have opened their inner ears and they hear; they have awakened their transport and they know. They know the transcendent mysteries and hidden secrets of God; they move in higher planes of absolute consciousness. They are in this world but not of it, and they want to take others also to their high stage of spiritual bliss and absolute knowledge.

2 Salvation here and now

How can we attain the stage of transcendent consciousness in this very life? Can we go beyond the portal of death during our lifetime, before the angel of death comes to take us away? To this the world says no, but mystics assure us that we can.

a. Liberation while alive, jivan mukti (जीवन मुक्ति)

The mystics achieve liberation while alive and they teach us also how to do it. Unless we find God now and reach subtle spiritual stages in our lifetime, where is the guarantee that we shall do so after death?

इह चेदशकद्बोद्धुं प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्त्रसः ।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥

If one realizeth not one's self during one's lifetime,
From life to life in a series of births and deaths
Must one go.

KATHA UPANISHAD II:3:4

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ॥

If one knoweth not one's self during one's lifetime,
The ills that may be in store for one after death,
One cannot even imagine.

KENA UPANISHAD II:5

साधो भाई जीवत ही करो आसा ॥ टेक ॥
 जीवत समुझै जीवत बूझै, जीवत मुक्ति निवासा ॥ ...
 अबहूँ मिला सो तबहूँ मिलैगा, नहिं तो जमपुर बासा ॥

During thy lifetime do thou hope to have realization,
 O thou mystic friend,
 For while living doth a person understand;
 Knoweth he while living,
 And while living doth he attain salvation....
 If here dost thou find him,
 Then shalt thou meet him hereafter;
 Else into the jaws of death shalt thou go.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.38:46

We should not rest on the hope of getting salvation after death. We can find transcendent life before our death.

من کہ امروز بہشت نقد حاصل می شود وعدہ فردائے زاہد را چرا بادر کنم

When heaven is being offered to me today,
 Wherefore shall I believe
 In the priest's promise of tomorrow?

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.730, 438:17

Salvation can certainly be obtained during our lifetime. Mystics assure us of this over and over again. If it was given to people only after death, how could we come to know of it at all?

ਮੁਏ ਹੁਏ ਜਉ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਦੇਹੁਗੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਕੋਇਲਾ ॥

If after death dost thou give me salvation, O Lord,
 Then salvation none would know.

NAMDEV, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1292

b. Dying while living (ਜੀਉਂਦੇ ਮਰਨਾ)

Salvation can be had in this very life, before we leave this mortal frame, only if we learn how to die before our final death. Mysticism teaches us how to do this; how to take our soul out of the body and transport it to high spiritual planes. By thus dying before our death, we go beyond all delusion and darkness and find the true bliss and beatitude of the spiritual planes here and now.

ਜੇ ਤੂੰ ਮਰੇਂ ਮਰਨ ਤੇ ਅਗੇ, ਏਹ ਮਰਨਾ ਮੁਲ ਪਾਵੇਗਾ ॥

If before thy death dost thou die,
This dying shall bear fruit.

BULLEH SHAH, REFERENCE NOT AVAILABLE

آں توئی کہ بے بدن داری بدن پس مترس از و جاں بیرون شدن

Thou art such that without the (physical) body
Thou hast a body (astral).
Be not afraid then of leaving thy mortal frame.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1613

The fruit of dying before one's death is liberation from the thralldom of maya and salvation from the bondage of karmas. All mystics strike the same note. Many Persian mystics quote the Prophet Muhammad as saying, "*Mutu qabla an tamutu*" – Die before dying!

موتوا قبل ان تموتوا

Before thy death do thou die.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:723

^a *Adhadith-i Mathnawi* 352.

ہر کہ پیش از مرگ مردہ از یک جہان غم خلاص ہر کہ بیرون رفت از عالم ز عالم شد خلاص

Whoever dieth before his death
Is relieved of a world of sorrow;
Whoever flieth out of the universe
Is delivered from the universe.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Mystics therefore invite us to go up into their blissful realms during our lifetime; they call us up.

خیز بالا شاں بیا پیش از اجل در گرشاہی و ملک بے خلل

Rise, O soul, and come thou up before thy death;
Behold thy kingdom and thy eternal home.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

بمیراے دوست پیش از مرگ اگر می زندگی خواہی

If life dost thou desire,
Then before thy death do thou die, O friend.

SANA'I, *DIVAN-I HAKIM SANA'I*, p.52

We cannot have true life unless we cross the boundary of death, and so to speak, are born again on the subtle spiritual planes during our lifetime.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

BIBLE, JOHN 3:3

بہر موت و اقبل موت ایں بود کز بے مردن غنیمت ہارسد

Of dying before death the secret is this:
That after such a dying
Divine blessings dost thou receive.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:3837

پیش مردن میراے نیکو سیر جان بجاناں دہ ز جان خود گزر

Die thou before thy death,
O thou of good disposition;
Offer thou thy life to the beloved Lord
And sacrifice thou thyself at His altar.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.41

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀਵਤਿਆ ਮਰਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਐਸਾ ਜੋਗੁ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥

Such a mystic practice do thou follow, O Nanak,
That thou diest even while living.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.730

Shabd Yoga is such a practice. It enables us to die while living and to experience transport into spiritual realms.

تا نمیری سود که خواهی ر بود رو بمر دهره بردار از وجود

So long as thou diest not,
What good dost thou gain?
O go thou into death,
And from thy body derive benefit.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

But this dying before one's death does not mean going out of the body altogether and severing one's connection with it. It only

means withdrawal of our conscious spirit current within us from the physical plane to the subtle transcendent realms. When we are in the waking state we are, so to speak, sitting at the windows of our house and looking outside. Our eyes, ears, nose, mouth and the like are external windows through which we perceive phenomena. In transport, we close those windows, open our inner window and go into the inner apartment of our self to look on reality.

3 Human beings – the microcosm

True light is within us; without, all is darkness and delusion. God is not physical or material, such that he may be found in this physical creation. He is extremely subtle and spiritual, and consequently we should seek him in spiritual transcendent realms, access to which is possible only through inner concentration. Therefore, mystics tell us again and again to look within. God abides in the deep recesses of our own being, but we search for him outside.

یار درو پس چراے خبر یار در خود تو چه گردی در بدر

Under thine own arm is thy Beloved,
And thou art ignorant;
In thyself is the Beloved,
And yet thou goest from door to door.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਆਪੇ ਵਸੈ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ ਲਖਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥
ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਮੁਗਧੁ ਬੁਝੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਭਾਲਣਿ ਜਾਈ ॥

In the body resideth he himself,
The transcendent divine being,
But the egoistic foolish fellow seeketh him outside.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.754

دریائے محیط در سبوتے در صورت خاک آسمانے

A vast ocean is enclosed in a pot,
And in a frame of clay (the human being)
Is heaven hidden.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

The infinite is contained in the apparently finite; the eternal resides in the outwardly evanescent; the transcendent absolute is screened in flesh and blood; the Supreme Being is concealed in the human body.

ਵਿਣੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਜਿ ਹੋਰ ਥੈ ਧਨੁ ਖੋਜਦੇ ਸੇ ਮੂੜ ਬੇਤਾਲੇ ॥
ਸੇ ਉਝੜਿ ਭਰਮਿ ਭਵਾਹੀਅਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਝਾੜ ਮਿਰਗੁ ਭਾਲੇ ॥

Who seeketh the Lord elsewhere,
And not in his body, is verily a fool;
In delusion doth he wander hither and thither,
Like the deer that for his own musk looketh in shrubs.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.309

God is within us but we foolishly search for him outside – in books, in rivers, in temples, in stones and elsewhere – but vain is our search. If we learn the path of Shabd from a mystic adept, we shall be able to find God within.

अपुनपौ आपन ही मैं पायौ ।
सब्दहिं सब्द भयौ उजियारौ सतगुरु भेद बतायौ ।
ज्यों कुरंग-नाभी कस्तूरी, ढूँढ़त फिरत भुलायौ ॥

In my own self have I found him;
Shabd giveth light and Satguru showeth the way.

Formerly, like the deer that wandereth about
In delusion for musk that is in his own navel,
Outside did I seek him.

SURDAS, *SUR VINAY PATRIKA* 285

ਪੁਹਪ ਮਧਿ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਸੁ ਬਸਤੁ ਹੈ ਮੁਕਰ ਮਾਹਿ ਜੈਸੇ ਛਾਈ ॥
ਤੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਹਰਿ ਬਸੇ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਘਟ ਹੀ ਖੋਜਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥

As scent is in the flower and reflection
In the mirror, so is God within thee;
In thine own body do thou seek him, O brother.

GURU TEGH BAHADUR, *ADI GRANTH*, P.684

a. *Human body – temple of God*

This human frame is the true temple of God, for he is to be realized and worshipped in it.

ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਏਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹੈ ਗਿਆਨਿ ਰਤਨਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਮਨੁਮੁਖ ਮੂਲ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ ਮਾਣਸਿ ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

The temple of God is this body,
From which come the rubies of knowledge;
But the egoistic people know not at all
That man can be the temple of God.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1346

تن راجو مشیت کاہ داں در زیر اور ریائے جاں گر چہ زیریں ذرۂ صد آفتابی اذروں

As a handful of straw dost thou know thy body,
But underneath it floweth the ocean of life;
Outwardly thou art a particle,
But inwardly art thou a hundred suns.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I KEBIR: BAHAR-I REMIL*, M4:3187

This small creature, the human being, is a wonder of wonders, but we know it not. If by the grace of the mystic adept our inner eyes are opened, then we will realize that the true temple of God is this human body.

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦੀ ਵੇਖੁ ਤੂ ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਲਿ॥

By the grace of Guru do thou behold –
Within thyself is the temple of God.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1346

External temples and places of worship do not have God in them, only idols of our own making, but this human body has been created by God after his own image, and he himself lives within it.

God created man; in the likeness of God made He him.

BIBLE, *GENESIS* 5:1

Ye are the temple of the living God.

BIBLE, 2 *CORINTHIANS* 6:16

For true realization we should look within, because there we have the living God. In the human body are all things: in it are orchards and gardens; in it are towns and cities.

ستم است گر هست کشد که بسیر سر و من در را تو ز غنچه کم نه دمیده در دل کشایه چمن در را

What a pity if thou desirest
To go to the cypress and jasmine!
For thou art thyself no less blossomed than a flower.
Open thou the door of thine own heart
And come thou into the garden.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

حیضم آید کہ خرامے ہما شائے چمن کہ تو خوشتر ز گل و تازہ تر از سرینبی

Alas! For recreation into the garden dost thou go;
For more fragrant art thou thyself than the red rose,
And fresher art thou than the dog rose.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

But without a perfect mystic adept to show us the way, we cannot find access inside into those divine gardens and heavenly assemblies.

در دماغ تو گلشن و مجلس سیر کن تیز تر و زمر شد پرس

In thy brain are gardens and assemblies;
O ask thou the Master, and go in at once
To enjoy those sights.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

b. All is within human beings

This human frame is indeed a wonderful structure. Within us are all worlds and universes. All transcendent secrets, all knowledge, all bliss, all love, all things are within.

ਘਰੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਵਸੁ ਹੈ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Within this house is everything,
And nothing is without.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.425

This body thus contains the whole universe; it is the epitome of all creation.

ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡੇ ਸੋਈ ਪਿੰਡੇ ਜੋ ਖੋਜੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Whatever is in the universe, the same is in the body;
Whosoever seeketh, verily doth he find.

PIPA, ADI GRANTH, P.695

در بحر وجود تست موجود هم طوفان مکنی و خواه انگری بشوی

In the ocean of thy body is everything;
Thou mayest have a tempest,
Or become thou an anchor.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਵਸੈ ਖੰਡ ਮੰਡਲ ਪਾਤਾਲਾ ॥
ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜਗਜੀਵਨ ਦਾਤਾ ਵਸੈ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ ॥ ...
ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਰਤਨ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਭਗਤਿ ਭਰੇ ਭੰਡਾਰਾ ॥
ਇਸੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨਉ ਖੰਡ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਹਾਟ ਪਟਣ ਬਾਜਾਰਾ ॥ ...
ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੀਚਾਰਾ ॥

In thy body is everything – subtle planes
And netherworlds; in thy body resideth
The almighty Lord himself, who sustaineth all....
In the body are gems, rubies
And storehouses of devotion;
In this body are all the nine dominions,
The earth, shops and bazaars;
In this body is the treasure of Nam,
That by the practice of Guru's Shabd is obtained.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.754

اندرویش رواں چوروح نمود گن تو سیرش بگر بهار وجود

When flieth thy soul inwards within thee,
Behold thou the beauty of thy body
And enjoy its sights.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND, 21:2

So we see that this human body is a model of the whole creation. We are, each one of us, the complete universe. We are the microcosm, *aalam-i sagheer* (عالم صغیر), of the cosmos, which is the macrocosm, *aalam-i kabeer* (عالم کبیر). We can know the macrocosm by studying the microcosm.

We study nature from outside but never look at her from within. For the nourishment of the tree, we are just wetting its leaves and branches but do not water the roots. The roots of the tree of creation are in the subtle planes, access into which can be had by looking within ourselves. We read external books of the world, but the inner book of ourselves we never care to see. In a single line of this wonderful book is concealed the whole treasure of transcendent knowledge, and one word of it means more than the whole learning of all the ages.

c. How is God within?

God is indeed within us and should be sought within, but this does not mean that he is a part of our physical frame and that we should search for him in the veins and arteries of our body. No, he is subtle and spiritual; he abides in the deep recesses of our being. Thus, although inside us, by killing the body we do not kill him. The death of this mortal frame does not touch him, for he is transcendent.

God is not part of our body for the same reason that he is not to be found in the material world outside. He is not physical or material. By saying that he is inside us, mystics mean that we can realize him only by concentration within ourselves. This concentration takes us out of the physical world and makes us subtle. When subtle, we can know other subtle spiritual entities. Unless we become very subtle ourselves, we cannot come into contact with God and other subtle entities.

It is a general principle that the organ of knowing should be suited to the object of its knowledge and be of proportionate

subtlety or sensitivity. Our eyes cannot see light which is too bright or too dim. Dazzling light looks like darkness. Similarly, our ears cannot hear sounds which are too high or too low. For sounds above or below the range of our ears, we use scientific instruments which make those sounds audible. Thus, by mechanical aids, we make our ears subtle enough to perceive subtle sounds. Similarly, very minute things or very distant objects remain invisible to the naked eye, but if we make our eyes subtler by applying microscopic and telescopic glasses to them we can see all those things.

All of this happens on the same plane of existence, the physical world. If we want to know something which is on the subtle astral plane, we have to become astral; and this we can do only by withdrawing ourselves inwards, by internal concentration. Absolute reality is extremely subtle and transcendent, and therefore to know it we must recede within our subtle transcendent self; we must become as subtle as that reality.

Phenomena conceal from our view the essence of reality; maya hides from us the face of Brahm. If we go on looking at the cover of maya or phenomena we shall never get at the reality beneath, but if we remove this veil of matter we shall certainly behold the glory of divine light. Only by concentrating within ourselves can we remove this veil of matter and see the splendour of pure spirit.

Moreover, when mystics say that God is within us, they do not imply that he is not without. No, God is omnipresent; he is everywhere and in all things; he is not confined within us; he exists outside as well. But by saying that he is within, they mean that unless we realize him within, we can never know him outside. We cannot see him with these physical eyes or hear him with these ears of flesh. But if by mystic intuition we behold his subtle transcendent being within ourselves, then we shall recognize him outside too.

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

BIBLE, LUKE 17:21

4 Body, mind and soul

Our body is a sort of a house for the soul; this spiritual entity, so to speak, resides in this mortal frame. Just as a house has windows and doors, similarly this moving house has several apertures and openings through which the soul looks out on external phenomena. But as the soul cannot leave it, this body has become a prison for the soul. The spirit is enclosed in the confines of the flesh; this divine entity is locked up in this little cell. Thus, there is a conflict between the soul and the body. Unless we manage to take our soul out of this confinement, we cannot see subtle spheres or have true knowledge or real bliss.

خلق را از بند صندوقِ فسوس که خرد جز انبیا و مرسلوس

O Lord, appoint a spiritually endowed mystic
To liberate humanity from the shackles
Of this magical box!

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:4504

Mystics are themselves free people and they can make others free as well. Whoever knows the art of going out of the physical body can teach it to others also, but not those who are themselves in bondage.

ای خدا بگماز قومِ رحم مند تاز صندوقِ بدن ما را خرد

Send us thy merciful mystics, O Lord,
So that from the encasement of this body
They might liberate us.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:4503

But it is not only the gross material body that imprisons us; our soul has a variety of chains and fetters to bind it. Five *tattwas* or vital elements (पाँच तत्त्व), three *gunas* or attributes (तीन गुण), twenty-five *prakritis* or kinds of primal matter (पच्चीस प्रकृतियाँ), *man* or mind (मन), and *maya* or illusion (माया) – all keep it covered and hidden. In itself the soul is ever knowing and blissful, but its light is concealed under these covers. If we put off these covers one by one, the spirit will shine forth in its inherent refulgence and shed its divine lustre all around it.

a. Three bodies of human beings

As already pointed out, we have not one body but three:

- The gross material body (स्थूल शरीर)
- The subtle astral body (सूक्ष्म शरीर)
- The subtler causal body (कारण शरीर)

If we get out of this physical frame by withdrawing ourselves inside, then with the astral body we move about in and perceive the astral creation. If we withdraw ourselves still further inside, we go out of the astral body as well. Then we use the causal body for knowing causal entities. If we withdraw ourselves even from that body and go still deeper into our inner being, we remove all covers from the soul and let it shine in its own sublime radiance.

Hence, realization means removing from the soul all the various covers that hide its divine reality and conceal its transcendent being. During mystic transport, the soul comes out of these confinements, and in a moment of eternal consciousness perceives the profound essence of its inner spirituality and beholds the divine face of the Supreme Lord. At that time our soul sees that it is a drop of the ocean of the Godhead, that in essence it is the same as the ultimate Infinite, who is the source of all creation and the fountainhead of all life.

b. Mind and soul

Our soul is, as already said, a drop of the ocean of ultimate absolute reality, Sat Purush (सत् पुरुष) or Haq (هَاق), but some people confuse that final stage with the lower stage of Om (ओम्) or Brahm (ब्रह्म). Some of us look upon Brahm as the final Lord, and the soul as a particle or drop of him, but it is not so. Brahm is not the final God, nor is soul a drop of him. Our soul emanated from Sat Purush, who is our real Lord; it is our mind (मन) that comes from Brahm.

Just as in its profound essence our soul is the same as Sat Purush, similarly, in its deep reality our mind is one with Brahm. Through mystic transport both reach their respective origins. The mind gets merged in Brahm or Om (who is, after all, a reality of the second order), but the soul goes higher up to Sat Purush and becomes one with him. He is the true reality of the first order, the ultimate absolute transcendent Lord.

c. Three forms of the mind

Our mind has three forms, or we can say that we have three minds:

(1) *Material mind* (पिण्डी मन): the mind as it is in the physical body, with its lower tendencies and limited capacity.

(2) *Astral mind* (ब्रह्माण्डी मन): the mind in the astral body, with its subtle powers and higher tendencies. Here it is one with Niranjana, who serves as mind for Brahm or Om.

(3) *Causal mind* (निज मन): the mind in the causal body, with its subtlest powers and highest tendencies. Here it is one with Brahm or Om, who serves as mind for Parabrahm.

Unless we go beyond all these three minds or three forms of the mind, our soul is not completely uncovered and we do not behold pure spirituality.

d. Knot of the conscious and the unconscious

Generally, we talk of mind or soul as if they were but one entity. Mind (मन) and soul (सुख) are in reality two things, but for the purposes of this world they are so closely joined that they tend to be looked upon as one. This is the subtlest form of the knot of the conscious and the unconscious (जड़ चेतन की गाँठ).

The real living entity is the soul; mind in itself is inert and a reality of the second order. It is the soul that puts life into the mind as well as into the body. Here in this material world, all these things – body, mind and soul – are closely joined together by strong ties of desire and bound hard by the chains of egoism and delusion. This is the knot of the conscious and the unconscious. Soul is conscious, all else in us is in itself unconscious. It is the soul that gives us consciousness and power.

e. How to open this knot

Shabd Yoga teaches us how to sunder mind and soul and take each to its source or fountainhead. Through transport is this hard knot unravelled and the soul set free from the slavery of the body and the mind. Matter remains in the sphere of matter, mind goes up to Brahm (ब्रह्म) and gets absorbed there, and the soul flies higher, up to Sat Purush, and merges in that highest being. This is the true conquest of the spirit over the flesh.

5 Recapitulation: The journey within

We have seen that salvation can be had here and now. By mystic flight we can cross the portal of death and have experience of the next world, the transcendent planes, before our soul finally leaves the body. If we do not know God in our lifetime, there is no surety that we will go to him after death. But dying before one's death means simply the withdrawal of the spirit current from the physical plane inside and then taking it up into the astral, causal, and spiritual spheres.

We are the microcosm of the whole creation, the macrocosm. In us are all treasures, all subtle worlds and even God. The human body is the true temple of God, for he abides in the deep recesses of our being and can be worshipped only inside ourselves. The more we recede into ourselves, the nearer we get to absolute reality. All is within us, but not as a part of our physical body; it is in our deep spiritual essence and being, concealed by several covers of different kinds of bodies – physical, astral and causal – which lie under or within one another.

Although for practical purposes our mind and soul may be seen as one thing, in reality they are two separate entities. They are bound in a knot, and Shabd mysticism alone opens this hard knot of the conscious and the unconscious and frees the conscious soul from the entanglements of unconscious matter and mind.

Mind is in essence Brahm or Om, who is a reality of the second order, while soul is in essence Sat Purush, who is the absolute ultimate reality. Our true being is soul and our true home is with Sat Purush, for below him it is all relative reality. Going up there into the bosom of the ultimate transcendent truth, we are not ensnared again by phenomena; reaching that true home of bliss, we suffer not again the pinch of delusion. There we behold the absolute truth of supreme oneness that comprehends and penetrates all; there we experience the rapture of pure spirituality and the ecstasy of divine light; there we exist in the existence of the ultimate absolute and live in the life of the true transcendent. And for transport into those spiritual realms, the vehicle is Anahad Shabd.

CHAPTER TWO

Shabd

SHABD ALONE takes us into the innermost recesses of pure spirituality; it alone casts off from over our eyes the veil of ignorance and delusion and shows us truth in its divine glory and celestial splendour. In a moment of eternal consciousness of Shabd, the soul embraces the whole of the cosmos and comprehends the totality of being; in a rapture of spiritual ecstasy it beholds the light of transcendent truth and bathes in the radiance of divine glory.

We are ignorant of that glory and have forgotten our true home with God, and we therefore suffer a perpetual round of misery and trouble. Our ignorance, however, is not intellectual; this forgetting is not mental. It goes deep into our being; it is stuck firmly to the root of our existence. If we are anxious to shake off this chronic lethargy and come out of this universal oblivion, we should try to find the Shabd.

I Transcendent

Shabd is a superconscious transcendent power. It can neither be heard with the ears nor uttered by the tongue. Pen cannot write it and language cannot describe it. It passes all human perception and conception; it transcends all limitation and dependence; it

goes beyond all duality and relativity. For its transmission it does not depend on any material element; it penetrates all things and all beings.

Shabd is the essence of all reality and existence – the divine Word, the heavenly Harmony, the celestial Music. It is the light and life of all creation; it is the very being of the ultimate absolute; it is the supreme current of spirituality, a wave or tide in the ocean of Godhead. It permeates all creation; it pervades the whole cosmos. Only the transcendent soul can come into contact with it; only in a superconscious rapture of mystic transport can we touch it and know it; only in a divine ecstasy of spiritual flight do we embrace it; only in a moment of eternal consciousness do we become one with it. Naturally, it transcends the physical senses and mental faculties.

ਅਖੀ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਕੰਨਾ ਸੁਨਣਾ ॥

Without eyes is it seen, and without ears is it heard.

GURU ANGAD, ADI GRANTH, P.139

ترک و کرد و پارسی گو و عرب فہم کردہ آں ندا ہے گوش و لب

Without ears and without lips is that voice known,
And all can know it:

Turks, Kurds, Persians and Arabs.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:2108

Save Shabd mystics, none knows the high spiritual realms of mystic transport.

مقاماتے بدیدم من حکایاتے شنیدم من بحالاتے رسیدم من کہ کس آنجا نبردہ ہے

Those places have I seen
and those stories have I heard,

And into that place have I gone
which none doth know.

MUINUDDIN CHISHTI, *DIVAN-I GHARIB NAWAZ*, P.227

सबद सबद सब कोइ कहै, वो तो सबद बिदेह ।
जिह्या पर आवै नहीं, निरखि परखि करि देह ॥

Of Shabd doth everyone talk,
But that Shabd is transcendent.
The tongue cannot utter it;
Only the soul can behold it and know it.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.92:5

اے خدا شما تو جاں را آں مقام کاندرو بے حرف می روید کلام

Reveal thou to my soul that stage, O Lord,
Where without words we do talk.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:3092

In those spiritual realms the transcendent Shabd resounds
without any medium and the soul talks without the lips and the
tongue.

شیخ فعال است بے آلت چوں حق بامریداں داد بے گفتم سبق

Like God, without hands
And without feet doth the Murshid act;
And without speaking
Doth he give lessons to his disciples.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:1323

Shabd cannot be put into words; it is a spiritual transcendent
lesson which goes direct from the soul of the teacher to the soul of

the pupil. It passes from soul to soul, directly and intuitively, without any media or means. What the Guru tells us orally is but an attempted description of, or a pointing to, this transcendent Shabd, which in itself can never be expressed in words or language.

2 Mentioned in all religions

Shabd is mentioned in the sacred books of all religions under various names, but those religions are unaware of it, confining themselves to the surface meaning of words. The profound mystic significance of Shabd can be unearthed only through the transport of the soul into realms ethereal and divine.

a. Different names, same power

In the Adi Granth, the scriptures sacred to the Sikhs that present the teachings of the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak and other mystics known at that time, this Essence of God or Being of the Most High has been expressed by such words as *naam* (ਨਾਮ), Name; *dhun* (ਧੁਨ), Music; *saar shabd* (ਸਾਰ ਸ਼ਬਦ), Essence Word; *sach* (ਸਚ), Truth; *sat shabd* (ਸੱਤ ਸ਼ਬਦ), True Word; *anahad shabd* (ਅਨਹਦ ਸ਼ਬਦ), Unstruck Sound; *baani* (ਬਾਣੀ), Word; *gurbaani* (ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ), Guru's Word; *akath katha* (ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ), Untellable Tale; and *ajapa jaap* (ਅਜਪਾ ਜਾਪ), Unutterable Utterance.

Hindus call it *naad* (ਨਾਦ), Music, or *aakaash vaani* (ਕਾਸ਼ੀ), Heavenly Voice.

Muslims call it *kalaam-i Illaahi* (کلامِ الہی), God's Word; *nida-i aasmaani* (نیدائے آسمانی), Harmony from the Skies; or *ism-i azam* (اسمِ اعظم), Greatest Name.

Christians call it *logos*, the Word, and the Name, the Holy Spirit, the Sound.

In their writings, Greek mystics also mention the Shabd. For instance, Socrates says that within himself he heard an inner sound which transported him to realms transcendent and divine; Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and mathematician, mentions

it too. When we read of the music of the spheres, it is perhaps a reference to the transcendent Shabd. Similarly, *logos* seems to point to this spiritual current.

As there are five forms of spiritual transcendent music up to the final stage, the mystic method of Shabd is also called the path of five melodies (ਪੰਜ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਦਾ ਰਾਹ), and it is called *shabd abhyaas* (शब्द अभ्यास) because *abhyaas* means practice and Shabd means the eternal, divine, transcendent Word.

This power has various names, but all point to the same thing: the transcendent current of spirituality which emanates from the absolute God and resounds in all planes and regions, creating and sustaining all life and being.

And since in this mystic path our soul or *surat* (सुरत) is to be united with the transcendent Shabd, the practice is also termed Surat Shabd Yoga (सुरत शब्द योग) – yoga meaning union. The word *sahaj* (सहज) means the spiritual transcendent state of beatitude of the soul in Sat Lok, the goal of this mystic method, so the practice of Shabd is also known as Sahaj Yoga (सहज योग).

ਸਹਜੈ ਨੋ ਸਭ ਲੋਚਦੀ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਾਇਆ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ ...
ਤਿਹੁ ਗੁਣਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਗੁਣਿ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇ ॥ ...
ਚਉਥੇ ਪਦ ਮਹਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

To attain *sahaj* everyone doth desire,
But without a Guru reacheth it not....
In the three gunas (qualities) *sahaj* cannot be attained,
For in delusion are the three gunas....
In the fourth realm is *sahaj*,
And the devotee of the Guru alone attaineth it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.68

Sahaj also means easy and natural, and in this sense too, the name Sahaj Yoga is appropriate to this mystic school.

The practice of Shabd is also known as *sultaan al-azkaar* (سلطان الاذکار), the king of all repetitions. *Sultaan* means king, and *azkaar* is the plural of *ziker* (ذکر), meaning repetition, also called *simran*. Other practices incorporate repetition of holy names of various languages, but the king of all repetitions gives us for repetition not words of this world but the transcendent Word of God, to be uttered and grasped by the soul on high spiritual planes.

Thus this transcendent power has been mentioned by various names, but there is nothing in a name. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Call it what we may, Shabd is the transcendent and all-pervading form of God; it is his heart and soul, his essence and existence, his life and light; it is God's very being, his very self, but it manifests itself in the form of divine music, unending and eternal – the divine Bani (बाणी) or sound current.

b. Sound current, Bani (बाणी)

بانگ وصیّے جو کہ آں خاں نشد تاب خورشیدے کہ آں آفل نشد

O seek thou that music which never dieth;

O find thou that sun that never setteth.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* IV:1659

That sun is visible to the soul only, and that music audible to spiritual ears only. The world at large does not know of these; the mystic alone hears that harmony and beholds that light.

ہم نشیں اوں بردہ پیچ بو ہنر دور نفس خود صد گفتگو

Within himself hundreds of voices doth he hear;

But of these even the person next to him

Has not an inkling.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

We do not hear that voice because our ears are clogged by the dirt of worldly desires and our minds are covered by the rust of sinful deeds.

نشود آن نغمه را گوشِ جس کز ستمها گوشِ جس باشد نجس

The sensory ear doth not hear those melodies,
For by evil deeds hath it been polluted.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:1920

But if it be purified by the inspiring words and ennobling company of mystics, it can hear that eternal melody.

ਜਨਮ ਜਨਮ ਕੇ ਲਾਗੇ ਬਿਖੁ ਮੋਰਚਾ ਲਗਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਸਵਾਰੀ ॥

With sensual desires of many lives is this mind rusty;
And by the company of mystics alone is it cleansed.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.666

Mystics clean away the dirt of our mind by applying the soap of Shabd or Nam.

ਮੂਤ ਪਲੀਤੀ ਕਪੜੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਦੇ ਸਾਬੁਣੁ ਲਈਐ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਇ ॥
ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਪੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

When clothes get dirty, they are washed with soap;
When the mind is polluted with sins,
By Nam is it washed clean.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.4

The Upanishads also mention the Shabd at various places. For instance in the *Nada Bindu Upanishad* of the *Rig Veda*, we have:

श्रूयते प्रथमाभ्यासे नादो नानाविधो महान् ।
 वर्धमाने तथाभ्यासे श्रूयते सूक्ष्मसूक्ष्मतः ॥
 आदौ जलधिजीमूतभेरीनिर्झरसंभवः ।
 मध्ये मर्दलशब्दाभो घण्टाकाहलजस्तथा ॥

In the beginning of this practice,
 Many loud sounds does one hear.
 Gradually they increase in pitch,
 And are heard more and more subtly.
 First one will hear sounds
 Like the waves of the ocean,
 Clouds, kettle drum and cataracts.
 At intervals one will hear
 The sound of the drum *mardala*,
 And of bell and conch.

NADA BINDU UPANISHAD 33-34

The first are elementary sounds; true Shabd begins with the astral music of bells and conches.

کس ندانست که منزل گه معشوق کجاست ایں قدر هست که با نغمہ سے می آید

Where the home of the Beloved is,
 No one doth know.
 They know only this much –
 That from it proceedeth the music of the bell.

HAFIZ, DIVAN-I HAFIZ, P.382, 206:5

Similarly, in the books of the Theosophists we have a reference to the inner sounds:

The first is like the nightingale's sweet voice, chanting a song of parting to its mate. The second comes as the sound of

silver cymbals of the dhyanis awaking the twinkling stars. The next is as the plaintive melodies of the ocean spirit imprisoned in its shell. And this is followed by the chant of the *vina*. The fifth like the sound of bamboo flute shrills in thine ear. It changes into a trumpet blast. The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of thunder cloud.

H. P. BLAVATSKY, *VOICE OF THE SILENCE*

If the soul ascends to the firmament of the astral plane, we shall be able to catch hold of the divine melody.

چرخِ راد در زیرِ پا آرائے شجاع بشنواز فوقِ فلک بانگِ سماع

Bring the firmament under thy feet,
O thou brave one,
And listen thou to the melodious Song
Coming from the heaven above.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:1942

The song goes on day and night, but as our inner ears are closed, we cannot hear it.

گفت پیغمبر کہ آوازِ خدا میرسد در گوشِ من، ہم چوں صدا
مہرِ گوشِ ثما بہ نہاد حق تا با آوازِ خدا نارد سبق

Loudly doth the voice of God
Reach mine ears, saith the Prophet,
But a seal hath the Almighty put on thine ears,
And therefore from that voice thou dost not learn.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:2880-2881

The voice of God comes from above and reverberates in all planes and spheres. The Most High invites us up into his blissful

mansions, but we are too intricately entangled in the meshes of this world to have an ear for that divine call.

ترازنگرہ عرش میزند صفر ندامت کہ دریں دامکہ چاقا دست

From the high turrets of heaven art thou called;
I know not why into this snare hast thou fallen.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.89, 32:5

We can hear that divine call only if we shut our ears to external sounds and close our eyes to external sights. If we stop the outward flow of our spirit energy through these openings and direct the soul current inwards, we shall experience mystic rapture and ecstatic transport.

چشم بند و گوش بند و لب بند گرنہ بینی برحق برمن بخند

O close thou thine eyes, thine ears and thy lips,
And if the secret of God thou dost not behold,
Then laugh thou at me.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.30

ਤੀਨੋ ਬੰਦ ਲਗਾਇ ਕਰ ਸੁਨ ਅਨਹਦ ਟਨਕੋਰ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧ ਮੇਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਾਂਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਭੋਰ ॥

Shutting the three doors,
O listen thou to the music of Anahad;
In the trance of Sunn, O Nanak,
It is neither morning nor evening.

GURU NANAK, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

आंख कान मुख बन्द कराओ ।
अनहद झिंगा सब्द सुनाओ ॥

Close thou thine eyes, thine ears and thy mouth,
And listen thou to the subtle Anahad Shabd.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.65:10

Our soul is a very subtle spiritual entity; it can comprehend and grasp transcendent truths without the aid of physical organs and mental faculties.

امر ربی است روح و سر خداست ذکر بے کام و بے زباں اور است

The essence and secret of God is the soul;
Without tongue and palate doth it talk.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELVI*, P.90

The Prophet Muhammad says in the Holy Qur'an:

الرَّوْحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي ۝ ٨٥

Soul is the Commandment (or Word or Will) of God.

QUR'AN 17:85

This will is one with Shabd, the infinite and eternal Word, which is without beginning and without end, all-pervading and all-penetrating, transcending all distinctions and limitations, ultimate and absolute, one with existence and life, the final reality of all realities. It is not bounded by anything. It is all in all, boundless and eternal, infinite and everlasting.

ਬਾਣੀ ਵਜੀ ਚਹੁ ਜੁਗੀ ਸਚੇ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇ ॥

Bani resoundeth in all the four yugas
And maketh one hear the absolute Truth.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.35

This eternal transcendent Story of Truth is told throughout all time, but we do not hear it, for we are gross and the Truth is subtle and absolute. On the subtle spiritual planes alone is it heard and grasped and embraced and entered.

زیں قصہ ہفت گنبد افلاک پر صداست کوتاہ نظر نہیں کہ سخن مختصر گرفت

This Story resoundeth in all the seven heavens,
But alas! The short-sighted know it not.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p.87

This 'Story' or Bani cannot mean writing in any language. No, it envelops all space and permeates all life; it reverberates through the range of infinite time, from eternity to eternity.

ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਣੀ ਨਾਉ ਮੀਠਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਪਿਆਰਾ ॥

From age to age existeth Bani,
Known as Shabd or Nam, sweet and dear.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, p.602

Bani, Shabd and Name – all mean the same thing. This transcendent power fills all space and reverberates through all time, but only the superhuman insight of mystic transport beholds it and knows it.

ہمہ عالم پراست از آواز یک درہائے گوش خود گن باز
باز کردن ہمیں بس ست ترا بند سازی رہ شنیدن را
اول و آخرش چو یحد شد ز اں سبب نام اود بانحد شد

The whole universe is full of this Voice,
If only thou openest thine ears and listenest to it!

Opening the ears meaneth only this –
 That any external sound thou dost not hear.
 Then shalt thou hear the Eternal Speech
 That transcendeth birth and death.
 As it knoweth neither beginning nor end,
 For this reason is it called Limitless.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELYI*, P.90

3 Within human beings

We seek Bani outside in books, but true Bani is inside.

ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰੇ ਸਾਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Inside ourselves is true Bani.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.769

It is by concentrating within ourselves that we can listen to that transcendent Word. Although this Bani is omnipresent, still we cannot come into contact with it unless we look inwards into our own selves. In this sense this Eternal Voice is within us; it is in the subtle spiritual planes, access to which can be had only by collecting our consciousness inside ourselves.

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਚੇ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿਉ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥

Inside (us) is the flame, and in that flame is Bani,
 Which createth in us love for the true Lord.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.634

निकसै एक आवाज चिराग की जोतिहिं माहीं ।
 ज्ञान समाधी सुनै और कोउ सुनता नाही ॥

A Voice cometh out of the flame of the lamp;
 But the trance of transcendent knowledge
 Alone heareth it,
 And none else doth hear it.

PALTU, *PALTU SAHIB KI BANI*, VOL. I, 169

We all possess this wonderful jewel of Bani, but we are ignorant of it. It is in us and for us, but we know it not.

भीखा भूखा को नहीं सब की गठड़ी लाल ।
 गिरह खोल नहीं जानते ता ते भये कंगाल ॥

None is poor, O Bhikha!
 Everyone hath rubies in his bundle,
 But how to open the knot he doth not know
 And therefore is he a pauper.

BHIKHA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Only by mystic transport can we get that jewel of the spiritual sound current, and that is true meditation on the Supreme Being.

a. Meditating on the Name of God

We often talk of meditating on the name of God, but we do not pause to reflect what this means. First of all, what do we understand by the name of God? God in himself has no name; he is absolutely transcendent, infinite and eternal, unbounded and unlimited. How can he have a name? Name pertains to the world of phenomena, this creation of relative existence, but God is beyond all relativity and multiplicity; he is the sole absolute, one and indivisible, all-comprehending and all-transcending, beyond all words and above all descriptions. He is truly nameless.

To this it may be added that we are not talking of the absolute of idealism, which is impersonal and transcendent and which the

philosopher Bradley denotes as 'It', but of the God of common religion who is our Heavenly Father. Moreover, even though God may have no name in himself, he has been given names by us.

Against this it can be urged that the God of common religion is not exactly the same for all religions. Further, there is a large variety of names and epithets ascribed to him. Now, which out of them all is to be selected for meditation? How is the selection to be made? Why should preference be given to the favourite word of any one religion?

Arya Samajis say that Om (ओम्) is the real name of God, but Sanatanists call him Ram (राम).^{*} Muslims prefer the word Allah (الله), and Sikhs Wahiguru (ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ). Similarly, other religions have their own special names for God. The question is: which is the true name of God? To say that all are equally good is not a logical answer. Moreover, different religions will not agree on this point. They quarrel among themselves, each trying to prove that its own term for God is his true name.

But the more keenly baffling anomaly in the proposition before us is: how to meditate on a name? How can we go on thinking on a word? It is no fun thinking on the structure of the word for hours and hours, and thinking on the meaning does not improve matters, for by thus thinking we cannot coin a new meaning. The meanings of a word are fixed by its usage and by general acceptance among the people who speak the language. No word has any intrinsic meaning; it means whatever it is meant to convey by the writer or the speaker.

Words are not conscious or living entities; it is we who infuse life into them and give them meanings and significance; it is because of our past association that we understand words uttered by other people. Meditating on words cannot elucidate their

^{*} The Arya Samajis and Sanatanists are two Hindu sects that take the holy Vedas to be the highest revealed books, but they differ on their interpretations.

import; thinking on a word cannot throw light on its implications and significance. In fact, meditating on a word, in the sense of true meditation and not mere thinking, has no meaning; it is absurd and futile.

Moreover, even if the phrase 'meditating on the name' is taken to mean our thinking of the lofty attributes of God, what good can accrue from this in the way of realization? By our subjective thinking, how can we hope to find out objective reality?

Further, as our imagination can never create new material, how shall we imagine or think of any new attributes of God? And is our present stock of knowledge about God so reliable and satisfactory that we are in a position to think up new phrases for his nature? Do we know anything about God at all? Can we know anything, with our intellect, of God, soul and other transcendent entities? No, we cannot, as has been conclusively shown.

b. True Name of God

Then which is the true name of God, and what is the meaning of meditating on his Name? This is a question that demands our serious consideration and careful thought, for this phrase is so very commonly used. In fact, it is a translation of one of the oft repeated sayings of the mystics, who always tell us to remember God and repeat his Name. They remind us again and again that we should never forget his Name and that we should devote some time every day to meditating on his Name. Now, what they really want to convey by such words is that we should get hold of the transcendent Name. That true Name of God is not a word; it is the spiritual power of Shabd that reverberates in the subtle spheres of transport.

कोटि नाम संसार में, ता तें मुक्ति न होय ।
आदि नाम जो गुप्त जप, बूझै बिरला कोय ॥

In the world are millions of names (of God),
 But salvation they bring us not.
 His original Name, which is a secret repetition,
 Very few indeed do know.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p.84:5

Shabd is the original, genuine, eternal name of God, which is a secret or transcendent repetition. It is his essence and being, his unwritten law, his unspoken language. We are asked to sing praises of God, that is, to do his *keertan* (ਕੀਰਤਨ), but instead we sing and play musical instruments. No doubt this has its own use and value, but true *keertan* is hearing the Shabd ringing within us.

ਕਲਿ ਕੀਰਤਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਪਛਾਨੁ ॥ ਏਹਾ ਭਗਤਿ ਚੂਕੈ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥

Know thou that *keertan* in Kaliyug is Shabd;
 Only by this devotion
 Canst thou get rid of thine egoism.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, p.424

Singing hymns does not remove our egoism and vanity; the real antidote for it is the inner transcendent Shabd.

ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
 ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੇ ਜੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਤਾ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥

Egoism is a deep disease, but the medicine
 Is also within. If (the Lord) shows his mercy,
 Then wilt thou practise the Guru's Shabd.

GURU ANGAD, *ADI GRANTH*, p.466

Through mystic practice of Shabd, our soul flies up into subtle spiritual planes and gets united with this transcendent, unuttered and unutterable name of the Supreme Being. Then is it freed from egoism and other weaknesses of the flesh.

c. Name is greater than Brahm or Om

This Name or Shabd is the highest power, above lesser prophets and incarnations, gods and goddesses, Brahm or Om.

ब्रह्म राम तैं नामु बड़, बर दायक बर दानि ॥

Greater than Ram and Brahm is the Name,
It giveth gifts and bestoweth boons.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS*, 1:25

Tulsidas places the Name above Ram and Brahm because they are both under the control of Nam or Shabd.

अगुन सगुन दुइ ब्रह्म सरूपा। अकथ अगाध अनादि अनूपा ॥
मोरैं मत बड़ नामु दुहू तैं। किए जेहिं जुग निज बस निज बूतैं ॥
उभय अगम जुग सुगम नाम तैं। कहेउँ नामु बड़ ब्रह्म राम तैं ॥

Formless and in form, both ways is Brahm,
Indescribable, eternal, unfathomable, wondrous.
But in my eyes greater than both is the Name,
For by its power doth it control them.
Both are transcendent,
But by the Name can they be realized;
The Name is greater than Ram and Brahm, say I.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS*, 1:22:1, 3

Not only this, Tulsidas goes a step further and says that the Name is so great that even the incarnation Ram cannot adequately describe its greatness.

कहाँ कहाँ लगी नाम बड़ाई । रामु न सकहिं नाम गुन गाई ।

How far shall I describe the greatness of the Name
When even Ram cannot sing its praise.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS*, 1:25:4

Ram was an incarnation of Brahm or Om in the materio-spiritual creation, but this transcendent Name comes from the highest stage, Satnam and Anami, in the purely spiritual realm. How then can Ram gauge the greatness of the Name?

4 Name or Shabd – the all in all

Shabd, the true transcendent Name of God, is the real thing; it is the staff of all existence, the life and light of all things and beings, the source and fountainhead of all knowledge, the repository of all truth. This Eternal Voice is genuine nectar dropped from the Most High; it is the true Bani that resounds in all space and through all time; it is the true *keertan* that sings eternal praises of the absolute Lord. It is an ocean of bliss and love, highest, purest, and transcendent. It is the ultimate reality, the absolute Supreme Being, transcendent, infinite, eternal; it is the all in all.

a. *Creator, Karta* (कर्ता)

Shabd is the foundation and support of the whole fabric of creation; it is the creator and sustainer of all worlds and universes.

ਸਾਰੀ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟੀ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਕੈ ਪਾਛੈ । ਨਾਨਕ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਘਟੈ ਘਟਿ ਆਛੈ ॥
ਸ਼ਬਦੈ ਧਰਤੀ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਅਕਾਸੁ । ਸ਼ਬਦੈ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਹੋਆ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸੁ ॥

From Shabd came the earth, from Shabd the sky,
From Shabd emanates all light.

The whole creation resteth on Shabd,
And this Shabd, O Nanak, abideth in us all.

GURU NANAK, *PRAN SANGLI STIPPAN*, VOL.2, P.6-7

Within ourselves is the Shabd that brings the cosmos into being, creates the whole universe, and gives shape to everything.

ਉਤਪਤਿ ਪਰਲਉ ਸਬਦੇ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਸਬਦੇ ਹੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥

Shabd createth, Shabd dissolveth,
And Shabd again bringeth creation into being.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.117

عالم از صوت از اظهر گرفت از حضورش بساط نور گرفت

This Sound createth the whole universe,
And to all lights it giveth birth.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELVI*, P.90

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥ ...
ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਆਗਾਸ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥

The Name supporteth all worlds and universes;
The Name sustaineth the upper realms
and the netherworlds.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.284

All religions state that Shabd, the Sound or Word, is the creator of the universe. The Vedas say that *naad* (नाद), Divine Music, created the fourteen parts, *chaudah bhavan* (चौदह भवन), of the cosmos. The Holy Qur'an says that *kalima* (کلمه), the Word of God, created the fourteen sections, *chaudah tabaq* (چودھ طبقہ), of the

universe.* Christians describe the same thing in their Bible. The very first lines of Saint John state:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

BIBLE, JOHN 1:1-3

b. Life and light, zindagi and nur (زندگی اور نور)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not....That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

BIBLE, JOHN 1:4-5, 9

This light does not shine among Christians alone, but "lights every man that comes into the world". This Word, the transcendent Shabd, is real life and true light. Physical light illumines only material objects, but the Word lights all transcendent realms and spiritual planes. Ordinary light shows only phenomena, only what seems, but the light of the Word reveals to us what is: the reality behind appearance. Among Christians, not only does Jesus Christ mention this transcendent light, but other mystics have also recorded their spiritual experience of it. Saint Augustine says:

*The *chaudah bhavan* are the seven higher worlds (heavens) and seven lower worlds (hells) of the Hindu tradition. The *chaudah tabaq* are the seven earth worlds and seven sky worlds of the Muslim tradition; planet Earth is located between the highest of the earth worlds and the lowest of the sky worlds.

I entered even into my inward self, thou being my guide, and able I was for thou wert become my helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was), above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the light unchangeable. Not this ordinary light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was this light, but other from all these. Nor was it above my soul, as oil is above water, nor yet as heaven above earth, but above to my soul because it made me; and I below it because I was made by it. He that knows the truth, knows what that light is, and he that knows it knows eternity. Love knoweth it. O truth, who art eternity, and love who art truth! and eternity who art love! Thou art my God, to thee do I sigh night and day.

SAINT AUGUSTINE,
THE CONFESSIONS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE, VOL.7:1:17

Of whatever caste and creed, all mystics who go into higher spheres within themselves mention this Shabd and this light.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਜਗਿ ਆਨੇਰੁ ਹੈ ਸਬਦੇ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

Without Shabd the world is dark,
And by Shabd hath it been lighted.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1250

In this world, the true light for all human beings is Shabd, without which we remain ignorant.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਆਨੇਰਾ ॥ ਨ ਵਸਤੁ ਲਹੈ ਨ ਚੁਕੈ ਫੇਰਾ ॥

Without Shabd darkness is within man;
His goods he getteth not, nor endeth
His cycle of birth and rebirth.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.124

Mystics, Eastern and Western, all strike the same note. Shabd is the true light that illumines the dark recesses of our being; it is real life that vibrates in the slender cords of the spirit. Our soul is, so to speak, imprisoned in the body. But, confined in the cage of the physical frame, this bird of heaven can regain its freedom of spiritual life through the transcendent Word. For our soul there is no other way of liberation save the divine melody, which draws it up above all matter into realms purely spiritual and transcendent.

گر گویم شمع زان نعمت جان ہا سر بر زند از دھما

If even an inkling of those melodies do I give thee,
Then will thy dead soul rise from its grave.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:1928

The body is the grave of the soul for it is, so to speak, buried in this earthly mould, and Shabd draws it up out of this grave as a magnet attracts a needle.

सबद बिना सुति आँधरी, कहो कहाँ को जाय ।
द्वार न पावै सबद का, फिरि फिरि भटका खाय ॥

Without Shabd the soul is blind;
Say, where can it go?
The way to Shabd it findeth not,
But falleth into delusion again and again.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.93:15

c. Nectar, amrit (ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ)

And what is true nectar and where is it found? Is it outside in physical objects, in the moon or the ocean, in books or sacred places, in jungles or mountains?

No, it cannot be in these things, for all physical phenomena and material objects are subject to dissolution and decay. If it were outside in any of these things, then those should not decay and wither; but in fact everything dies. Hence, nectar is nowhere outside. It is inside human beings. True nectar is Shabd. It brings us the eternal life of the spirit. Other so-called elixirs are either mere chimeras or nectars in name only. Shabd unites us with the Lord and takes us to the transcendent stage of immortality. Shabd alone is therefore genuine nectar and true elixir; this alone transports us to the very core of life and being; this alone takes us to the innermost recesses of truth and reality; this alone gives us eternal bliss and beatitude.

ਘਰ ਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਭਰਪੂਰੁ ਹੈ ਮਨਮੁਖਾ ਸਾਦ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਜਿਉ ਕਸਤੂਰੀ ਮਿਰਗੁ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਕ੍ਰਮਦਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇਆ ॥ ...
ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਸਭ ਜਗੁ ਬਉਰਾਨਾ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਨਮੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਏਕੋ ਸਬਦੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

In thine own self is nectar full to the brim;
But without the Guru you taste it not,
Just as the deer knoweth not its musk
But keepeth wandering hither and thither....
Without Shabd the whole world is mad
And wasteth life in vain.
Shabd alone is the sole nectar;
The Guru's devotee alone findeth it, O Nanak.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.644

The true nectar that gives life and light, bliss and immortality is within human beings; it flows out of the current of Anahad Shabd.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਵਰਖੈ ਅਨਹਦ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Anahad Bani raineth nectar
And giveth peace to mind and body.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.105

The real nectar is in the Anahad Bani, but we cannot get its effect by talking or thinking or reading or singing, it cannot be described; it is only to be tasted.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਚਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਕਹਣਾ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਪੀਵਤ ਹੁ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ਭਇਆ ਪੂਰੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

Name is true nectar, but what can we say?
Who mergeth in Shabd,
He alone drinketh and knoweth it.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.33

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਖੁਹਟਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਭਰਿਆ ਸਬਦੈ ਕਾਢਿ ਪੀਐ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ ॥

Inside is a well full of nectar,
And by Shabd doth the soul take it out to drink.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.570

Thus, true nectar is in ourselves; it is Shabd. All other nectars of the world are mere tinsel; they are sham; they do not give us eternal life or bliss; they do not transform our being. External nectars are mere forms, hollow, and empty of the reality of Shabd, which perhaps once was in them.

If a jewel is wrapped up in a piece of paper, the value is not that of the paper but of the jewel that is inside. Similarly, Shabd is a jewel. If it is bestowed on one by a true mystic through an external ceremony, the value of the ceremony lies in the transcendent

Shabd. In itself, the ceremony is nothing; it is the jewel of Shabd that lends it value and charm; if it is void of that jewel, it has no value.

Mystics deal with the real jewel; religions hold tenaciously to outward ceremonies. We can never have true nectar unless we receive it from one who possesses it himself. Only mystics possess the nectar of Shabd; only they can give it to others. Although Shabd is in ourselves, yet the key is with mystics. Instead of getting true nectar from within, we try to find it outside in rituals and ceremonies, in lakes and rivers, oceans and mountains, birds and insects, trees and stones, the moon and stars, and whatnot. We are ignorant and in the dark; we seek nectar in the wrong place. Nectar is within us, and if we go to a perfect mystic adept he will teach us how to dig out this nectar of Shabd from within ourselves.

d. Truth, sach (ਸਚ)

Further, what is truth? Telling the truth is not the truth, for when all die and the world is dissolved, this kind of truth will disappear and vanish. Truth should be eternal and everlasting. Moreover, in the world of phenomena, there is only relative truth. What is absolute truth? Shabd alone is truth because it does not die or vanish; it lives forever, for all ages and times. It is indestructible and everlasting; the truth which was, is and ever shall be.

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥

In the beginning was the Truth;
At the commencement of the ages (yugas) was the Truth;
Now is the Truth,
And, O Nanak, ever shall remain the Truth.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1

To know that absolute and transcendent truth we have to come out of our vanity and presumption of intellectual attainments and enter the domain of devotion and transport.

بشنو فارغ ز علم و زهد یکدم بکش جرعه از جام مغانه

O for a moment relieve thou thyself
Of all thy learning and piety,
And take thou a drop
From the cup of the mystic adept.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.90:83

We find truth in drinking from the cup of love, through devotion to the mystic adept who transports us to realms divine and spiritual. It is the ecstasy of mystic rapture that opens our inner eyes to the transcendent truth of the rarest essence of existence and being. Shabd is the reality of all realities and the truth of all truths. By knowing this truth, we go into the land of superconscious, eternal bliss.

ਜਿਨੀ ਸਚੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਸੇ ਸੁਖੀਏ ਜੁਗ ਚਾਰਿ ॥
ਹਉਮੈ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਰਿ ਕੈ ਸਚੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਉਰ ਧਾਰਿ ॥

Who realizeth truth,
Findeth he bliss in all the four ages;
Killing egoism and desire,
Truth doth he cherish in his heart.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.55

Truth gives us bliss, truth gives us wisdom. Having known this absolute truth once, we can never unknow it. When once our soul realizes its union with Shabd, it always remains one with it.

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜਿਸ ਕੈ ਸਚੁ ਵਸੈ ਸਚ ਸਚੀ ਸੋਇ ॥
ਸਚਿ ਮਿਲ ਸੇ ਨ ਵਿਛੁੜਹਿ ਤਿਨ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

True wisdom hath the one in whom Truth abideth.
Who hath been united with Truth
Never again is separated from it,
And in the true home doth he find abode.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.27

ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਵੀਛੁੜੈ ਜੇ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੋਈ ॥

Who is united (with the Lord) once,
Is separated not, if truly he is united.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.729

This transcendent truth takes us to the Lord, but first it cleanses us of impurities. In liberating us from the thralldom of ignorance and sin, it works like a most powerful medicine.

ਸਚੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਰੂ ਪਾਪ ਕਢੈ ਧੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਵਖਾਣੈ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਜਿਨ ਸਚੁ ਪਲੈ ਹੋਇ ॥

Truth is the antidote for all ills;
And all sins doth it wash away;
Who hath in him the treasure of truth,
Saith Nanak, findeth he this effect.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.468

This absolute eternal truth does not become old or rusty. The maxim of "the old order changeth, yielding place to new" does not apply to it. It is always the same: fresh, invigorating, elevating,

* Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Poems*, "La Morte D'Arthur".

life-giving, sublime, and transcendent. No dirt can touch it, for it is one with the ultimate reality.

ਸਚੁ ਪੁਰਾਣਾ ਨਾ ਥੀਐ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਮੈਲਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

Truth becometh not old;
Nam becometh not unclean.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1248

Shabd or Nam is the final absolute transcendent truth; it cannot be false or old or unclean; it is always the same – the ultimate truth of all reality.

e. Knowledge, gyan (ਗਿਆਨ)

And what is real knowledge? As shown earlier, intellectual understanding is not true knowledge, for it changes from time to time and from place to place. Different with different people, it is unreliable and uncertain. Shabd alone is true and real knowledge. Among Chinese mystics it appears to have been known by the name of Tao. It is not theorizing and reasoning like intellectual knowledge; it is direct mystic intuition, subtle spiritual insight, transcendent realization. When we become the very reality that we want to know, there is no scope for doubt or uncertainty. When the soul comes into contact with Shabd, it is drawn upwards from phenomena into reality and eventually merged into that ocean of being.

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਧੁਨਿ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਅਕਥੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

True knowledge and meditation is Shabd;
Unutterable is it called.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.59

Being the direct realization of truth, this mystic insight is reliable, for it is not intellectual understanding but spiritual becoming. Therefore, this true knowledge controls the actions of our life and stops us from going wrong.

f. Curbing of passions

Shabd alone has the power of bringing the mind under control and uprooting evil desires; Shabd alone can overcome the downward tendency in humans and assert the supremacy of the spirit over flesh. It is no easy task to subdue the mind.

حق قدم بر دئے نہد از لامکان آنگہ اوساکن شود از گن فکان

When from eternal transcendence
God placeth his foot upon it,
Then by the Heavenly Harmony
Is it curbed and controlled.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

धुन सुन कर मन समझाई ।
कोटि जतन से यह नहीं माने । धुन सुन कर मन समझाई ॥

By listening to Dhun is the mind controlled;
It doth not yield to millions of efforts;
By listening to Dhun alone is it controlled.

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND, 9:9

ਮਨਸਾ ਆਸਾ ਸਬਦਿ ਜਲਾਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

Shabd burneth all desire,
And the Guru's devotee findeth (the flame) within him.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.940

When the soul comes into contact with Shabd, it is transported to a higher sphere and all lower tendencies leave it. The five passions in humans – *kam* (काम), lust; *krodh* (क्रोध), anger; *lobh* (लोभ), greed; *moh* (मोह), attachment; and *ahankaar* (अहंकार), egoism – leave the devotee in the regions of the materio-spiritual plane. Therefore, the great mystic Kabir says:

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਧੁਨਿ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਅਕਬੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

Killing all the five, be thou devoted to the Lord.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KA SAKHI-GRANTH*, P.71:2

If by Shabd we transcend all the five passions, then our devotion to God will be perfect and unhindered and we shall be able to attain an everlasting union with him. Egoism is deeply embedded in human nature; nothing can eradicate it except this transcendent Music.

اگر آئند بگوشت صوت آں کوس ز کبر و از حسد یا بدرهائی

When the beat of that Drum reacheth thine ears,
From egoism and jealousy doth it liberate thee.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.405

That subtle music of the transcendent drum of the causal region transports us into subtle spheres, beyond human vanity and egoism and above the slavery and bondage of flesh. Thus, it is by means of Shabd alone that we can overcome temptations and drive out the devil in us.

Shabd gives us that true knowledge which does not die or change and which transforms our very beings. This knowledge is not theory but direct realization, not conjecture but inner spiritual

experience, not thinking but transcendent becoming; it is becoming the ultimate reality ourselves.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਬਉਰਾਨਾ ॥

Without Shabd the whole world is mad.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.644

The world is mad because, leaving aside true spiritual goods, it goes after tinsel, after material gain. We do not achieve the object of our life if we fail to realize self and God. This we can do only through Shabd; therefore, if we do not get Shabd, we merely waste away the days of our life.

ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਸੇ ਅੰਨੇ ਬੋਲੇ ਸੇ ਕਿਤੁ ਆਏ ਸੰਸਾਰਾ ॥

Who knoweth not Shabd is blind and deaf;
What did he come into the world for?

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.601

g. Bliss, aanand (आनन्द)

And what is true happiness? How do we attain it? Real happiness is not to be found in sensual indulgence. All pleasures of the senses are superficial and ephemeral; they are not lasting; they are there for the moment and then no more. Moreover, there is no unalloyed happiness in this world. All our enjoyment is tinged with sadness; all our pleasure mixed with pain. The consequence of indulgence in sensual pleasures is, invariably, disease and suffering.

ਬਹੁ ਸਾਦਹੁ ਦੂਖ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਭੋਗਹੁ ਰੋਗ ਸੁ ਅੰਤਿ ਵਿਗੋਵੈ ॥
ਹਰਖਹੁ ਸੋਗੁ ਨ ਮਿਟਈ ਕਬਹੂ ਵਿਣੁ ਭਾਣੇ ਭਰਮਾਇਦਾ ॥

Too much enjoyment resulteth in pain.
 Indulgence in sensual pleasures
 Endeth in disease and dejection.
 Pleasure removeth not pain,
 And in delusion do humans come and go.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1034

Can we call an experience happiness when it ends in pain and misery? No, happiness should end in happiness; it should be positive and absolute. Shabd alone affords us such true happiness and bliss.

ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸੁਖ ਊਪਜੈ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਰਾਤਉ ਸੁਖ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

In the union of the soul with Shabd is happiness;
 In the realization of the almighty Lord is bliss.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.62

True bliss lies in the practice of Shabd and the mystic transport of the soul into the realms of absolute reality. When one drinks the true nectar of Anahad Shabd, one attains a state of supreme bliss.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵਰਖੈ ਅਨਹਦ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ ਮਨ ਤਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਮਾਣੀ ॥

Anahad Bani raineth nectar
 And giveth peace to mind and body.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.105

If we think deeply, we shall find that all peace and happiness is within ourselves; it is due to our own attention that we get pleasure from external objects. In the first instance pleasure lies

in concentration; anything that leads to the concentration of the mind gives pleasure. But if our mind is absent, nothing can give us pleasure, not even the most fascinating thing on the face of the earth.

Swami Rama Tirtha in his writings brings out this point very clearly by observing that in childhood we take delight in our toys, but as we grow up the object of our attention and interest changes, and with it the source of our pleasure. The toys of our early days give us pleasure no longer. It is now something else to which our thought is riveted, such as books or games. But a time comes when these too cease to give us delight. When we are full of youthful energy and passion, it is love for the other sex that is uppermost in our mind. Nothing is so charming as a wife, but that wife too gives place to still other things in turn. Now it is children that we want, and then it is fame and glory. The circle of our pleasure goes on shifting its centre as we grow up, and the things that yield pleasure vary from moment to moment.

If pleasure were objectively inherent in things, then those things should please us always. But there is hardly anything in the world that gives delight to everyone and at all times. For our amusement and entertainment, we want different things at different times; one thing will not do. This clearly shows that pleasure as such is not within things; it is due to our attention. The chess player engrossed in the game thinks that there is nothing so delightful as chess; the non-chess player wonders how such an apparently tedious task can afford pleasure and recreation. It is our own interest and attention that lend charm to the things we take delight in. "True bliss is centred in the mind."

But mere concentration gives us only lukewarm satisfaction, which is not stable. It is neither intense nor lasting. We can only have real happiness if, after concentration, the soul is transported by means of Shabd practice into the astral and higher spiritual planes.

ਮੈ ਸੁਖੀ ਹੂੰ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ ਗੁਰਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਸਾਇਆ ॥

In bliss, in bliss am I,
For Shabd hath my Guru manifested within me!

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.73

Shabd gives us true beatitude; Shabd transports us into a state of rapturous ecstasy.

گر مظهر حقیقہاں این پاری بخواند در رقص حالت آرد پیر این پارسارا

If our Musician were to sing but one tune,
Into ecstasy and dancing would fall the pious priests.

HAFIZ, DIVAN-I HAFIZ, P.33

Shabd is wealth that cannot be stolen nor drowned. Whatever we may do to a mystic we cannot deprive him of this blissful treasure. It is his for good, for all ages and times. In life, in death, under all circumstances it is his, for it has entered into the very essence of his being and coloured his very soul.

دو لئے را کہ نباشد غم از آسیب زوال بے تکلف بشنود دولت درویشان است

Oh, for that wealth which feareth not decay!
Absolute is the transcendent treasure of mystics.

HAFIZ, DIVAN-I HAFIZ, P.76

The treasure of Shabd is inexhaustible; it yields us the highest, purest and most intense bliss. That bliss is positive and absolute, transcendent and abiding, infinite and eternal.

b. Love, prem (प्रेम)

Shabd is not only an ocean of bliss, but also the consummation of all true and sublime love. Love at its climax is transcendent. The

highest form of love is love in full knowledge; all worldly attachment is in ignorance and delusion. Shabd is a spontaneous and natural attraction of our soul for the Supreme Being and for other souls who are all drops of the same ocean. This Shabd attraction is mutual and reciprocal. The soul loves God, but God loves the soul even more intensely.

گر تر از عشق اود باشد خبر از تو مشتاق است اومشتاق تر

If of his love didst thou know,
Then (wouldst thou find that)
Keener is He than thyself.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P. 41

"God waiteth for man to regain his childhood in wisdom." Yea, in the transcendent wisdom of Shabd realization.

"God findeth himself by creation," when his creatures attain him the through the mystic transport of Shabd. Love between Shabd mystics and God is conscious and natural, true and lasting, blissful and absolute. Shabd mystics therefore love all creatures and beings just as God loves all. He loves all because all are in him and of him.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being." The mystics' love is a universal spiritual attraction in a rapture of divine ecstasy; it is an expression of the transcendent knowledge of absolute oneness. When the reality is one, there is no other to love. This reality is compact; it is an indivisible unity. All parts of it, so to say, possess a natural transcendent affinity for the other parts, because in reality the whole is one and there are no parts. The whole loves the whole at every point. God is that whole, and so are the mystics; they see but one reality spread out in manifold phenomena.

* Bible, *Acts* 17:28.

During spiritual flights of mystic transport the mystics go out of themselves, so to speak, out of their delusive appearance as human beings, and in a flash of divine light become one with the absolute, transcendent reality. Intellectually learned people opine that humans cannot become God, but Shabd mystics through their devotion and love attain the transcendent stage of supreme oneness.

For instance, can one go out of time and space? Intellect says no, but mystic love says yes.

عقل گوید شش حدست و پنج بیرون راه نیست عشق گوید هست راه و رفتن ام من بارها

Reason saith: six directions* there are

And no way leadeth out of these.

Love asserteth: there is a way,

And many a time have I gone (on that path).

RUMI, *DIVAN-I KEBIR: BAHR-I REMIL*, 8A:32

The philosopher Kant says that by thinking and reasoning we cannot go beyond the categories of the mind and understanding. Shabd – that divine and transcendent love of God – is what takes us out of time and space and above the sphere of causation and relativity. Mystic love transports us to realms that transcend the bounds of reason. Shabd carries us beyond all relativity and finitude into the bosom of transcendent love and transports us into a state of inseparable union with the Supreme Being.

God is love, and so is our soul. God is the ocean; soul is a drop. The drop beholds the ocean and rushes towards it in a superconscious ecstasy of transport. This is a subtle, spiritual, superconscious, spontaneous attraction – inherent, irresistible, transcendent. It is

*The six directions are north, south, east, west, zenith (above) and nadir (below).

a self-expression of the ultimate, absolute reality, name it what we may – love, bliss, ecstasy or Shabd. This loving Voice of God calls us up into spiritual realms.

سار عشق اونا گاہ آید ترا برہاند از جان ہوائی

The Music of his love cometh all of a sudden,
And from the clutches of greed and lust
Doth it liberate thee.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P. 405

This divine love is beyond all learning and above all thinking.

کرشمہ تو شرابے بہ عاشقاں پیوود کہ علم بے خبر افتاد و عقل بے حس شد

Such a wine hath thy miracle served to thy lovers
That learning knoweth not and reason findeth not.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P. 174

This transcendent Shabd is the wine of mystic love, and those who drink of it are transported to divine raptures and spiritual ecstasies.

ਅਕਥ ਕਹਾਨੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮੁ ਆਖੈ ਆਇ ॥
ਤਿਸੁ ਦੇਵਾ ਮਨੁ ਆਪਣਾ ਨਿਵਿ ਨਿਵਿ ਲਾਗਾ ਪਾਇ ॥

Who telleth the unutterable story of love,
To that beloved one shall I give my mind,
And at his feet shall I fall again and again.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P. 759

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੁ ਨ ਲਭਈ ਜਨ ਵੇਖਹੁ ਮਨਿ ਨਿਰਜਾਸਿ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਪੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਮੇਲੇ ਗੁਰ ਸਾਬਾਸਿ ॥

Without a Guru, love thou canst not have.
 O think thou clearly in thy mind:
 God hath placed himself in Guru.
 All thanks to Guru who uniteth us with God.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.996

All credit goes to the Guru, but unless he manifests this divine love in us we cannot attain the high spiritual stages. Unless he opens this stream of Shabd in us, we cannot get salvation and liberation from maya and phenomena.

5 Why Shabd attracts us and how it takes us up

a. Like attracts like

But how is it that Shabd draws us up? In essence, Shabd is the same thing as our soul; there is a mutual attraction between the two. Both are made of the same material, if we may call it so, the same stuff. Birds of a feather flock together; like attracts like. Everything has a natural affinity and attraction for its fountainhead or source. The drop wants to merge into its ocean, and the stream flows down to embrace the sea.

Our soul is a drop of Shabd, which draws it up as a magnet attracts a needle. It is a spontaneous spiritual expression of the inner being of our soul; it is a natural, superconscious, transcendent attraction of the ocean for its drop, of the sea for its wave. It is the deep, divine love of the mother for her child, of the universal Mother of all creation for her spiritual child lost in phenomena. The attraction is natural and spontaneous, spiritual and transcendent.

b. How Shabd takes us to the highest stage

Being a purely spiritual power, Shabd has access to purely spiritual realms. Gross things like pranas cannot go into subtle spheres, but as Shabd is made of the subtlest kind of stuff, if we

may put it so, it penetrates all stages and enters the rarest essence of existence. It comes from God, it goes to him; it is his essence and being, his life and light. Therefore, riding on it the soul also finds access to the highest spiritual realms and attains transcendent union with the absolute Lord.

c. Five melodies (پنج سبده)

Mystics mention five Shabds and they also say that Shabd is one, that it is the sole and single reality. This seems to present a contradiction to certain people, but in reality there is no contradiction in it. Shabd is truly and always one, but its manifestations on different planes of creation are different.

Just as ice, water and vapour are not three things but only three forms of the same thing, similarly, Shabd is one but its forms are many. In the very highest transcendent realms it abides as an extremely fine and subtle power, but as we descend towards less subtle regions, Shabd also takes less subtle forms. It is always and eternally one, but as it passes through five different kinds of creation it appears as so many different Shabds. Therefore, mystics talk of its five melodies.

ہر روز پنج نوبت بر در آید ہے کو بند کوں کبریائی

Every day resoundeth five melodies
From the door of the most high.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P. 405

خاموش پنج نوبت بشنوز آسمانے کاں آسمان بیروں زان ہفت وایں شش آمد

O hush thee and listen thou
To the five melodies coming from above
That are beyond these six (centres)
And the seven (heavens).

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P. 138

That transcendent melody is not to be found in our six focuses of the material creation, the chakras (षट् चक्र). It reverberates from above the seventh heaven of the astral plane and above. Mystics of the highest spiritual stage, Hindus, Muslims or any other, all mention the five melodies of Shabd. From the astral plane of Turiya up to the purely spiritual and transcendent stage of Satnam there are five main divisions, and in each of these Shabd appears with a different melody. Therefore, the great mystic adepts count five melodies up to Sat Lok, which is our true home beyond dissolution and decay. The path to that home of ours of absolute spirituality is through these five melodies.

पंचे सबद अनाहद बाजे संगे सारंगपानी ।
कबीर दास तेरी आरती कीनी निरंकार निरबानी ॥

As the thirsty findeth water,
So hath Kabir found the five melodies of Shabd,
And thus doth he worship thee,
O thou unutterable Nirankar.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.1350

The five melodies ring within us. Unless one reaches Satnam, these five Shabds are not completed. Hence, the perfect adept reveals all the five Shabds in us and takes us to our true home in the highest spiritual realms.

ਘਰ ਮਹਿ ਘਰੁ ਦੇਖਾਇ ਦੇਇ ਸੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸੁਜਾਣੁ ॥
ਪੰਚ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਧੁਨਿਕਾਰੁ ਧੁਨਿ ਤਹ ਬਾਨੈ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥

Who showeth us our home within us,
He is a true Guru, perfect and all knowing.
The ringing and resounding of five melodies,
This reverberation of Shabd, is the sign.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1291

ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਮੇਲ ਭਇਆ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ ਘਰ ਮੰਦਰ ਸੋਹਾਏ ॥
ਪੰਚ ਸਬਦੁ ਧੁਨਿ ਅਨਹਦ ਵਾਜੇ ਹਮ ਘਰਿ ਸਾਜਨ ਆਏ ॥

By eternal union with the Lord, day and night,
Pacified is my mind, glorified all my house (body);
And as into my house cometh my beloved Lord,
Resoundeth the five melodies of Anahad Shabd.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.764

d. True Melody

The lower melodies up to Brahm disappear with the dissolution of those regions, but the real essence of Shabd, in Parbrahm and above, is eternal and everlasting. Therefore, one who merges himself in that true melody goes beyond the sphere of Kal (Time).

जाप मरै अजपा मरै, अनहद हूँ मरि जाय ।
सुरत समानी सबद में, ता को काल न खाय ॥

Jaap dieth, *ajapa* dieth, and dieth also *anahad*;
But the soul merged in Shabd, Kal toucheth not.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P.96:51

Jaap is recitation of words by the tongue or in the mind, *varnatmak naam* (वर्णात्मक नाम); *ajapa*, 'the unrecited', is the Shabd or spiritual music of the first stage, Niranjana Desh; *anahad* is the Shabd or melody of Brahm or Om. All these three die at the time of Dissolution, when the whole creation – physical, astral and causal – is withdrawn into Brahm; but the transcendent Shabd of Parbrahm and higher stages does not die. That is the true Shabd of saints and perfect mystic adepts and is called Sar Shabd (सार शब्द), which means 'real' or 'true' essence of Shabd.

Raja Janak, the mystic king, by half an hour's repetition with *vivek* (discernment) is said to have taken a large number of souls

from hell and landed them in *swarg*, but Tulsi Sahib says that this is not the method of saints. Their repetition is Sar Shabd, which goes on forever.

ਧਨ ਧਨ ਰਾਜਾ ਜਨਕ ਹੈ, ਜਿਨ ਸੁਮਿਰਨ ਕੀਆ ਬਿਬੇਕ।
 ਏਕ ਘੜੀ ਕੇ ਸੁਮਿਰਤੇ, ਪਾਪੀ ਤਰੇ ਅਨੇਕ॥
 ਐਸਾ ਸੁਮਿਰਨ ਜਾਨਿ ਕੇ, ਸੰਤਨ ਪਕੜੀ ਟੇਕ।
 ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਮਿਰਨ ਸਾਰ ਹੈ, ਬਿਸਰੇ ਘੜੀ ਨ ਏਕ॥

Great is the king Janak,
 Who did repetition with discrimination,
 And by half an hour's repetition
 He saved many sinners.
 Knowing this repetition as such,
 Saints did not adopt it.
 True repetition is *saar*, O Nanak,
 Which even for an hour is forgotten not.

TULSI SAHIB, *RATNASAGAR*, p.87

This Sar Shabd, the true and eternal melody, is found in the spiritual realms above Brahm or Om. It begins from Parbrahm and goes up to Satnam and Anami, which is our true home, and from which we do not return into the imprisonment of Kal, nor fall again into the cycle of birth and death. To go back to that transcendent home should be our ideal in life, and Shabd is the only means of transport into that absolute stage.

e. Surat (सुरत) and nirat (निरत)

Although mystics have called the soul *surat* (सुरत), yet in a narrower sense *surat* also means the hearing power. We have two main kinds of inner powers which are made use of in the mystic practice of Shabd for crossing the vast regions which lie between the physical plane and Sat Lok. Those powers are called *surat* and *nirat*.

Surat (सुरत) is the hearing power of the soul, by means of which it listens to the melody of Shabd, advances in its course and ultimately merges in Sar Shabd.

Nirat (निरत) is the seeing power of the soul, by means of which it beholds subtle entities of higher planes. Sometimes the soul goes forward with the help of *nirat*, by seeing the path with its own light, just as a car goes on a dark road with the help of its headlights.

For every devotee in this practice of Shabd Yoga it is essential to awaken these latent faculties of the soul to be able to make progress and find access into the highest realms, and it is contact with Shabd that awakens these powers in us.

6 Preliminaries to Shabd

Now, the question arises: How can we reach that point where we come into contact with Shabd? If our brain cannot comprehend it, our eyes cannot see it, and our ears cannot hear it, how can we become subtle enough to catch hold of it? Unless we reach the third eye focus, which is the entrance to the astral plane – the window between the material and the materio-spiritual creation – we are not subtle enough to come into contact with it. How can we reach that point? How can we collect ourselves at the third eye? We can do so by repetition of holy names.

a. *Simran* (सुमिरन) or *zikr* (زکړ)

Simran or zikr, the repetition of holy names, is said to be the best method for collecting the scattered mind; it is the first preliminary step in all mystic research. But which name are we to repeat, and where do we fix our attention?

In answer to the second part of the question, it is clear that we should collect our soul at the focus of its headquarters, the *tisra til* (तीसरा तिल) or third eye, which Muslim mystics call *nuqta-i*

suwaida (نقطۂ سیاہ), 'the black spot'. It is no easy task first coming down to a lower centre and then ascending up. In the waking state, the soul is already at the third eye, which is above the six focuses in *pind*, the body (पिण्ड के छः चक्र).

As already stated, if we are on the sixth storey of a many-storeyed house and want to go up, we need not come down to the ground floor to begin our ascent; we can go up directly from the sixth storey, where we already are. If we are in the middle of climbing a hill we need not come down to the foot of the mountain in order to climb up to the top; we can begin climbing up directly from the place where we are. This saves much time and labour. Hence, we should go up directly from the third eye, where we already are in the waking state.

To collect the soul at the third eye focus we repeat the holy names given by the living mystic at initiation. Which names depends in large measure on the mystic adept's cultural, religious and language background. What is important, nay essential, is to find a true and perfect Shabd mystic.

Since we need to go up into inner subtle planes, adepts generally tell us to repeat the five names that relate to the five manifestations of God on the five inner stages from the astral region to Sat Lok.

पाँच नाम का सुमिरन करो । श्याम सेत में सूरत धरो ॥

Repeat thou the five Names;
Concentrate thy soul in Shyam-Set.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 26:4:156

Shyam-Set literally means 'black and white'; it is a technical name for the first stage in the materio-spiritual creation.

When we repeat the sacred names in our mind, our thoughts go by association to the inner stages. Repetition helps us in collecting

our scattered mind inside and preparing our soul for the upward journey. The advantage of using these five names over other names is that, as these five are connected with inner spiritual reality and are imbued with the mystic adept's spiritual power, they facilitate our work of inner concentration. All spoken and written names for God are *sifaati* (صفاتى), 'attributive', given to God for his various qualities, but they may not inherently have the power to lift the soul to the pure spiritual planes beyond the astral region.

We must not forget that there is nothing very much in a name. One name may be as good as another. The real power does not lie in the words; it lies in the mystic adept. Therefore, whatever name the Perfect Guru gives us, that is the best for us and shall certainly lead to concentration and inner realization.

ਸਿਮਰਉ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਉ ॥
ਕਲਿ ਕਲੇਸ ਤਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਮਿਟਾਵਉ ॥

Repeat (the holy Name), and by repetition
Do thou attain happiness,
Removing pain and trouble from the body.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.262

The chief power in repetition is the spiritual power of the mystic adept, transferred to the disciple at the time of initiation. Therefore, whatever name he gives the devotee, it has that power.

ਜਿਨਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਪਿਓ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮਤਿ ਵਾ ਕੇ ॥
ਜਮਕੰਕਰ ਕਾਲ ਸੇਵਕ ਪਗ ਤਾ ਕੇ ॥

Whoever doth the repetition according to the instruction
And guidance of the Satguru,
His bound slaves shall be the angel of death and Kal.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1042

The real power lies in the word of the perfect adept; whatever he utters has effect.

ਸਾਧ ਬਚਨ ਪਲਟੈ ਨਹੀਂ, (ਜੋ) ਪਲਟਿ ਜਾਇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥

The Word of the saint is never proved false,
Even though the whole universe be turned over.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P. 118:17

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਬਚਨੁ ਸਦਾ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਬਚਨਿ ਕਟੀ ਜਮ ਫਾਸੀ ॥

Guru's Word is ever eternal;
Guru's Word sunders the chain of the angel of death.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.177

The Word of the perfect mystics always comes true; its effect is not destroyed even with the final dissolution of the world.

In terms of meditation, proper repetition is that which is in obedience to the word of the Satguru. Real power lies in resigning to his will, in loving him and following his instruction. So whatever name the Satguru gives, that is best for us. The true word or name of God is, of course, Anahad Shabd. Repetition of the words of a particular language is adopted only to concentrate our mind and reach that transcendent name.

As the soul gets collected and concentrated at the third eye focus, the devotee has some preliminary experiences of inner sounds and lights before reaching the third eye, for instance, sounds like those of a running train, a whistle or a cricket, *binda* (ਬਿੰਡਾ) or *jheengur* (ਝੀਂਗੁਰ).

आँख कान मुख बन्द कराओ, अनहद झिंगा सब्द सुनाओ।

Close thou thine eyes, thine ears and thy mouth,
And listen thou to the subtle Anahad Shabd,
Which is like the sound of a *jheengur*.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI*, VOL.1, P.65:10

Then one hears sounds like the jingling of small bells and lastly the ringing note of a big bell, and one sees lights such as the glowing of burning charcoal, of lightning and of a shining star.

ਤਾਰਾ ਚੜਿਆ ਲੰਮਾ ਕਿਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲਿਆ ਰਾਮ ॥
ਸੇਵਕ ਪੂਰ ਕਰੰਮਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਦਿਖਾਲਿਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

A comet hath appeared.
How is it seen, O Lord?
By Satguru's Shabd
Doth the fortunate devotee behold it, O Lord.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1110

Prophet Ibrahim also says that he saw a star. Then is seen a whole starry sky, containing what is described in the Vedas as the path of the gods (देवियाँ और पितृयाँ मार्ग), and the sun and moon. The Upanishads also mention the forms and lights which a mystic student experiences on the threshold of spiritual ascent.

नीहारधूमाकानलानिलानां खद्योतविद्युत्स्फटिकशशीनाम् ।
एतानि रूपाणि पुरःसराणि ब्रह्मण्यभिव्यक्तिकराणि योगे ॥

Such forms doth he see as mist and smoke,
Sun, fire, wind,
Firefly, lightning, crystal and moon.

SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD 11:2:11

Now if we collect our mind one moment, it gets scattered again the next moment. Repetition of holy names does collect one's

attention, but the attention gets scattered again if we do not keep it there by some means. That means is dhyān or contemplation.

b. Dhyān (ध्यान) or tasawwūr, contemplation of form

At the third eye, the threshold of the astral plane (सूक्ष्म लोक), the Radiant Form (नूरी स्वरूप) of the mystic adept waits for the devotee. By gazing steadily at his shining face one can keep one's mind fixed there for a considerable length of time.

गुरु का ध्यान करो तुम निस दिन।
गुरु का शब्द सुनो नित कान ॥

In thy mind do thou contemplation
On the form of the Guru,
And Guru's Shabd do thou ever listen to
With thine ears.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND*, 8:17:40

When a perfect Shabd mystic initiates us into his fold, at that time his astral form comes and stays within us at the third eye focus, which is the portal of the materio-spiritual creation. There he waits for our arrival, either at our death or earlier in our lifetime by means of the mystic practice.

ਬਿਨ ਪਉੜੀ ਗੜਿ ਕਿਉ ਚੜ੍ਹਉ ਗੁਰ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਨ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥

Without stairs how canst thou climb up the fort?
By contemplation of the Guru
Dost thou find ascent to God.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.17

The Guru is the staircase that leads us up from the physical to the astral plane and beyond; without identifying ourselves

with him by inner concentration and contemplation, we cannot go up.

जब यह ध्याता ध्यान में, ध्येय रूप हो जाय ।
पूरा जानो ध्यान तब, या में संशय नाहिं ॥

When in contemplation becomest thou,
O gazer, one with the gazed upon,
Then know thou that perfect is thy contemplation,
And in this have thou no doubt.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Thus, there can be nothing better to contemplate than the divine form of the mystic adept.

c. *Dhun* (धुन)

When we have thus first collected our attention at the third eye focus by repetition and then trained our mind to stay there at the portal of the astral plane by contemplating on the Radiant Form of the adept, then *Dhun* (धुन), the melody of *Shabd*, which is his real being, manifests itself and attracts us up into higher spiritual realms.

گوش را نزد یک کن کاں دور نیست یک آں گفتن، تو دستور نیست

O take thou thine ear close to it, for it is not far;
But thou art not used to listening to it.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

If we undergo the training of the first two steps, *simran* and *dhyān*, then through such devotional practice our mind will be purified and our soul enabled to catch hold of the subtle *Shabd*. The Guru is but the visible expression of *Shabd*, and *Shabd* is the

ethereal form of the Guru. Both are in essence the same; one is a spiritual transcendent being and the other its physical, human manifestation. The Guru is Shabd incarnate and embodied. Shabd is the Guru stripped of his gross covering, this material overcoat. In essence, the Guru is one with Shabd.

The Word was made flesh.

BIBLE, JOHN 1:14

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Shabd is Guru,

And soul is the disciple of that melody.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.943

The physical form of the Guru is, so to speak, the reflection on the physical plane of the astral Radiant Form, which is more real. The astral form in its turn is a reflection of a higher spiritual form of the same entity, which is still more real, and so on till we reach the very highest plane, where the being of the mystic adept is one with the absolute Lord himself. The essence of both God and Guru is the transcendent Shabd.

Thus the real and final step in this practice is listening to the Shabd, the divine melody, but this listening is not physical or mental, it is spiritual and transcendent. Our journey into spiritual regions commences only when we come into contact with the eternal Word.

When we set out on a journey in this world, we pack up our things and get ready for the journey. Similarly, when we go inside into subtle spiritual planes, we have to make certain preparations before we actually fly up. Simran and dhyan are the preparations for this spiritual journey, but for advanced students who have caught hold of Shabd, these are automatic.

Just as we learn the alphabet before we learn the language, similarly we have to practise simran and dhyan before we can catch hold of Shabd. Just as after having mastered the alphabet and begun learning words and sentences there is no need to go back to the alphabet, similarly after completing the course of simran and dhyan and having succeeded in grasping and catching hold of Shabd, there is no need to go back to the first two.

Advanced mystics are united with Shabd; they have passed the stage of simran and dhyan; they can go up to any transcendent plane in an instant, and whenever they like. Just as we move about in this physical world, similarly, rather more freely, they move about in all subtle spiritual planes. Nay, they are lords and masters of all creation. But for a beginner, simran and dhyan are essential; one has to undergo this training to become fit to grasp the subtle Anahad Shabd.

7 Comparison with other forms of devotion and religious practices

As already shown, mystic practices other than Shabd are difficult and sometimes risky, but above all, they do not take us into purely spiritual realms, beyond decay and dissolution.

a. *The Vedas*

The study of books cannot give us a peep inside, nor can the Vedic practices transport us into the highest plane of rare spirituality and transcendence, the ultimate stage of absolute reality.

ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੋਨੀ ਥਕੇ ਬੇਦਾਂ ਕਾ ਅਭਿਆਸੁ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਈ ਨਹ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਵਾਸੁ ॥

The pundit, the learned man, becometh tired of study,
Speechlessness and Vedic practices;

But alas, his heart to God's Name he doth not give,
Nor findeth he access to the true home.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1277

God's Name, as already shown, is Shabd, without which we cannot go to Sat Lok, our true home. Further, the Vedas and Shastras (Hindu scriptures) deal with good and bad actions; they do not take us beyond the sphere of morality and relativity.

ਬੇਦੁ ਪੁਕਾਰੇ ਪੁੰਨ ਪਾਪ ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਦਾ ਬੀਉ ॥
ਜੋ ਬੀਜੈ ਸੋ ਉਗਵੈ ਖਾਂਦਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਉ ॥

The Vedas talk of good and evil
As the seeds of *swarg* (heaven) and *narak* (hell).
Man reapeth what he soweth,
And that only doth he eat.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1243

ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਪੁੰਨ ਪਾਪ ਬੀਚਾਰਦੇ ਤਤੈ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣੀ ॥
ਤਤੈ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਤਤੈ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣੀ ॥

Smritis and Shastras consider good and evil,
But know not the real essence;
Without Guru the real essence can never be known.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.920

Lord Krishna also states in the Bhagavad Gita that the Vedas are within the sphere of the three gunas or qualities and that if one wants absolute knowledge, he must go beyond the teachings of the Vedas.

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

The Vedas deal with the three gunas (qualities);
 Be thou above these three gunas, O Arjuna,
 And be thou beyond the pairs of opposites,
 Ever steadfast in truth, careless of possessions,
 And full of the soul or self (*atman*).

BHAGAVAD GITA II:45

The knowledge of the Vedas is within the sphere of relativity and delusion, for it does not go beyond Brahm or Om (Trikuti); it does not take us into the absolute realm of the more purely spiritual stages. That Shabd alone can do.

ਬੇਦ ਬਾਦੁ ਨ ਪਾਖੰਡੁ ਅਉਧੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥

The Vedas talk of delusion,
 O *avadhu* (ascetic);
 The devotee of Guru practiseth Shabd.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.908

b. Jaap (ਜਾਪ)

Apart from meditation on the Name, no other *jaap* (जाप), recital of holy passages, is of much use, for nothing save Shabd can take us above phenomena or maya.

ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਿਸਾਰਿਆ ਕਿਆ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪਹਿ ਹੋਰਿ ॥
 ਬਿਸਟਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਕੀਟ ਸੇ ਮੁਠੇ ਧੰਧੈ ਚੋਰਿ ॥

Who hath left out Nam,
 In vain doth he perform other recitations;
 Like a maggot in filth
 Wasteth he his time in idle pursuits.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1247

We read books, recite holy sayings and sing hymns, but without Shabd or Nam, we cannot find reality.

ਹੋਰੁ ਕੂੜੁ ਪੜਣਾ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਨਾਲਿ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਬਿਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

Save Nam nothing is stable, O Nanak;
Vain is all other reading and speaking
And attachment to phenomena;
Reading leadeth nowhere.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.84

ਨਾਨਕ ਪੜਣਾ ਗੁਨਣਾ ਇਕੁ ਨਾਉ ਹੈ ਬੂਝੈ ਕੋ ਬਿਚਾਰੀ ॥

There is only one Nam to read and contemplate,
O Nanak;
Rarely doth any reflective one realize this.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1246

True reading is the reading of that Word, which was, is, and shall ever be; which creates and sustains all life; which is one with God. We cannot find God by *jaap* or recitals, but only through Guru's Shabd.

ਪਾਠੁ ਪੜੈ ਨਾ ਬੂਝਈ ਭੇਖੀ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇ ॥
ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਰਸਨਾ ਹਰਿ ਰਸੁ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

By recital he is known not;
In delusion are all sects!
By Guru's instruction is God ever found,
And the tongue tasteth the nectar of his bliss.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.66

Reading, reciting, singing – all these are useful in their own place, but they cannot take us out of delusion and maya into stages of absolute reality; they do not bring us spiritual realization. Shabd alone can do that; Shabd alone can take us out of Kal's prison into our true home.

c. Charity and holy bathing

Similarly, other good and benevolent actions such as giving money and things in charity and bathing at holy places, although useful, cannot compare with the practice of Shabd Yoga, which alone manifests God in us.

ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨ ਮੰਨਿਓ ਸਬਦਿ ਨ ਲਗੋ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥
ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਜੇਤਾ ਕਰਹਿ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

Who hath no faith in Satguru,
Nor love for Shabd,
In vain doth he give in charity,
And taketh he holy baths in vain;
For all this is ignorance and delusion.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.34

d. Other forms of religious devotion

Austerities and religious rituals, all are in the same boat; they cannot equal Shabd or give us truth. Guru Nanak in this poem cites extreme practices that people of his day would have been familiar with and that were performed under the illusion that they would take a practitioner to heaven.

ਤਨੁ ਬੈਸੰਤਰਿ ਹੋਮੀਐ ਇਕ ਰਤੀ ਤੋਲਿ ਕਟਾਇ ॥
ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਸਮਧਾ ਜੇ ਕਰੀ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਅਗਨਿ ਜਲਾਇ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੈ ਤੁਲਿ ਨ ਪੁਜਈ ਜੇ ਲਖ ਕੋਟੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

ਅਰਧ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਕਟਾਈਐ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਵਤੁ ਧਰਾਇ ॥
 ਤਨੁ ਹੈਮੰਚਲਿ ਗਾਲੀਐ ਭੀ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਰੋਗੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
 ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੈ ਤੁਲਿ ਨ ਪੁਜਈ ਸਭ ਡਿਠੀ ਠੋਕਿ ਵਜਾਇ ॥

ਕੰਚਨ ਕੇ ਕੋਟ ਦਤੁ ਕਰੀ ਬਹੁ ਹੈਵਰ ਗੈਵਰ ਦਾਨੁ ॥
 ਭੂਮਿ ਦਾਨੁ ਗਊਆ ਘਣੀ ਭੀ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਗਰਬੁ ਗੁਮਾਨੁ ॥
 ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮਿ ਮਨੁ ਬੇਧਿਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਸਚੁ ਦਾਨੁ ॥

ਮਨੁਹਠ ਬੁਧੀ ਕੇਤੀਆ ਕੇਤੇ ਬੇਦ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥
 ਕੇਤੇ ਬੰਧਨ ਜੀਅ ਕੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰ ॥
 ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥

If thou casteth thy body into fire,
 Or gettest thyself cut limb by limb,
 Or trainest thy mind and body in hardship
 By burning fire all round thee day and night,
 God's Nam these equaleth not,
 Even if thou performest
 Thousands upon thousands of such actions.

If thou hast thy body sundered in two,
 Or placest thy head
 Under the sacred saw (at Banaras).
 Or lettest thy body rot in Himalayan snow,
 Even then the disease of the mind leaveth thee not.
 Nothing equals God's Nam;
 Thoroughly all these practices have I tested.

If in charity thou dost give heaps of gold,
 Elephants and horses, land and a number of cows,
 Even then thy inner vanity forsaketh thee not.
 Oh, by God's Nam hath my heart been pierced;
 Guru hath bestowed this boon of truth upon me.

Many try by persistence of will
 And many by Vedic study and practices,
 But innumerable are the shackles for the soul,
 And the Gurmukh (devotee of the Guru) alone
 Findeth the door to salvation.
 All else is below the truth; truth is above all.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.62

Absolute, eternal, real truth is Shabd. All other practices are inferior to Shabd Yoga, for they keep us in delusion. Shabd alone takes us into reality and gives us peace and bliss.

ਖਟੁ ਸਾਸਤ ਬਿਚਰਤ ਮੁਖਿ ਗਿਆਨਾ ॥ ਪੂਜਾ ਤਿਲਕੁ ਤੀਰਥ ਇਸਨਾਨਾ ॥
 ਨਿਵਲੀ ਕਰਮ ਆਸਨ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ॥ ਇਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਜੀਉ ॥
 ਅਨਿਕ ਬਰਖ ਕੀਏ ਜਪ ਤਾਪਾ ॥ ਗਵਨੁ ਕੀਆ ਧਰਤੀ ਭਰਮਾਤਾ ॥
 ਇਕ ਖਿਨੁ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਜੋਗੀ ॥ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਉਠਿ ਧਾਵੈ ਜੀਉ ॥

Man findeth not peace by learned discourses
 On the six schools of Hindu philosophy,
 Nor by worship, ritual, and bathing at holy places,
 Nor by *neoli karm* and the eighty-four yogic postures.

The yogi practiseth austerities and recitals
 For years and years,
 And roameth in the world from place to place,
 But peace of mind he doth not enjoy even for a moment,
 Ever wandering again and again.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.98

ਜਾਪੁ ਤਾਪ ਗਿਆਨ ਸਭਿ ਧਿਆਨ ॥ ਖਟ ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਵਖਿਆਨ ॥
 ਜੋਗ ਅਭਿਆਸ ਕਰਮ ਧ੍ਰਮ ਕਿਰਿਆ ॥ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗਿ ਬਨ ਮਧੇ ਫਿਰਿਆ ॥
 ਅਨਿਕ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਕੀਏ ਬਹੁ ਜਤਨਾ ॥ ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਹੋਮੇ ਬਹੁ ਰਤਨਾ ॥

ਸਰੀਰੁ ਕਟਾਇ ਹੋਮੈ ਕਰਿ ਰਾਤੀ ॥ ਵਰਤ ਨੇਮ ਕਰੈ ਬਹੁ ਭਾਤੀ ॥
ਨਹੀ ਤੁਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੀਐ ਇਕ ਬਾਰ ॥

ਨਉ ਖੰਡ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਫਿਰੈ ਚਿਰੁ ਜੀਵੈ ॥ ਮਹਾ ਉਦਾਸੁ ਤਪੀਸਰੁ ਥੀਵੈ ॥
ਅਗਨਿ ਮਾਹਿ ਹੋਮਤ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ ਕਨਿਕ ਅਸੁ ਹੈਵਰ ਭੂਮਿ ਦਾਨ ॥
ਨਿਓਲੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਰੈ ਬਹੁ ਆਸਨ ॥ ਜੈਨ ਮਾਰਗ ਸੰਜਮ ਅਤਿ ਸਾਧਨ ॥
ਨਿਮਖ ਨਿਮਖ ਕਰਿ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਕਟਾਵੈ ॥ ਤਉ ਭੀ ਹਉਮੈ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਵੈ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਤ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਹਿ ॥

ਮਨ ਕਾਮਨਾ ਤੀਰਥ ਦੇਹ ਛੁਟੈ ॥ ਗਰਬੁ ਗੁਮਾਨੁ ਨ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਹੁਟੈ ॥
ਸੋਚ ਕਰੈ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਅਰੁ ਰਾਤਿ ॥ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਤਨ ਤੇ ਜਾਤਿ ॥
ਇਸੁ ਦੇਹੀ ਕਉ ਬਹੁ ਸਾਧਨਾ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਟਰੈ ॥
ਜਲਿ ਧੋਵੈ ਬਹੁ ਦੇਹ ਅਨੀਤਿ ॥ ਸੁਧ ਕਹਾ ਹੋਇ ਕਾਚੀ ਭੀਤਿ ॥
ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਊਚ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਿ ਉਧਰੇ ਪਤਿਤ ਬਹੁ ਮੂਚ ॥

All recitals, austerities, knowledge, meditation,
Discourses on Smritis (Hindu scriptures)
And the six schools of Hindu philosophy,
Yoga practice, ceremonies, rites and rituals,
Renouncing all and roaming in jungles,
Many efforts in various ways, benevolent actions, charity,
Sacrifice of a lot of jewels,
Getting the body cut with proper ceremony,
Burning of incense, observing fasts,
Disciplining the mind in different forms –
Nothing equaleth the practice of God's Nam;
With the help of the Guru recite thou
His Nam once, O Nanak.

If thou roamest in the nine dominions of the world
And livest long, practisest severe austerities

And feelest great disappointment with the world,
 Offerest thy body as sacrifice to the sacred fire,
 Givest in charity gold, horses, elephants and land,
 Performest *neoli karm*
 And practisest several yogic postures,
 Adoptest the difficult practices
 And rituals of the Jain religion,
 And gettest thy body cut inch by inch –
 Even then the dirt of egoism leaveth thee not.
 Oh, nothing equaleth God's Nam;
 The disciple of the Guru, by reciting his Nam,
 Attaineth to salvation, O Nanak.

If with thy mind full of desires,
 Thou diest at a sacred place,
 Vanity leaveth thee not;
 If thinkest thou day and night,
 The dirt of thy mind goeth not out of the body;
 If trainest thou this body by various hard practices,
 The poison of the mind still lurketh behind;
 If thou wastest an unbaked earthen vessel
 With water for a long time, it doth not become clean;
 The praise of God's Nam, O my mind, is very high;
 Many low and degraded humans
 Have through Nam found salvation, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.265

ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮਹਲਾ 5

ਪਾਠੁ ਪੜਿਓ ਅਰੁ ਬੇਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿਓ ਨਿਵਲਿ ਭੁਅੰਗਮੁ ਸਾਧੇ ॥
 ਪੰਚ ਜਨਾ ਸਿਉ ਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਛੁਟਕਿਓ ਅਧਿਕੁ ਅਹੰਬੁਧਿ ਬਾਧੇ ॥

ਪਿਆਰੇ ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਮਿਲਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਮੈ ਕੀਏ ਕਰਮੁ ਅਨੇਕਾ ॥
 ਹਾਰਿ ਪਰਿਓ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਕੈ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਦੀਜੈ ਬੁਧਿ ਬਿਬੇਕਾ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਮੋਨਿ ਭਇਓ ਕਰਪਾਤੀ ਰਹਿਓ ਨਗਨ ਫਿਰਿਓ ਬਨ ਮਾਹੀ ॥
ਤਟ ਤੀਰਥ ਸਭ ਧਰਤੀ ਭ੍ਰਮਿਓ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਛੂਟਕੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

ਮਨ ਕਾਮਨਾ ਤੀਰਥ ਜਾਇ ਬਸਿਓ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਵਤ ਧਰਾਏ ॥
ਮਨ ਕੀ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਉਤਰੈ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਜੇ ਲਖ ਜਤਨ ਕਰਾਏ ॥
ਕਨਿਕ ਕਾਮਨੀ ਹੈਵਰ ਗੈਵਰ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਦਾਨੁ ਦਾਤਾਰਾ ॥
ਅੰਨ ਬਸਤ੍ਰ ਭੂਮਿ ਬਹੁ ਅਰਪੇ ਨਹ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਹਰਿ ਦੁਆਰਾ ॥

ਪੂਜਾ ਅਰਚਾ ਬੰਦਨ ਡੰਡਉਤ ਖਟੁ ਕਰਮਾ ਰਤੁ ਰਹਤਾ ॥
ਹਉ ਹਉ ਕਰਤ ਬੰਧਨ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿਆ ਨਹ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਾ ॥
ਜੋਗ ਸਿਧ ਆਸਣ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਏ ਭੀ ਕਰ ਕਰ ਰਹਿਆ ॥
ਵਡੀ ਆਰਜਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜਨਮੈ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਗਹਿਆ ॥

ਰਾਜ ਲੀਲਾ ਰਾਜਨ ਕੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਕਰਿਆ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਫਾਰਾ ॥
ਸੇਜ ਸੋਹਨੀ ਚੰਦਨੁ ਚੋਆ ਨਰਕ ਘੋਰ ਕਾ ਦੁਆਰਾ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਹੈ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਮਨ ਕੈ ਕਰਮਾ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਜਿਸੁ ਪੁਰਬ ਲਿਖੇ ਕਾ ਲਹਨਾ ॥

ਤੇਰੇ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਇਹ ਰੰਗਿ ਮਾਤਾ ॥
ਭਇਓ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲੁ ਦੀਨ ਦੁਖ ਭੰਜਨੁ
ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਨਿ ਇਹੁ ਮਨੁ ਰਾਤਾ ॥

Thou dost recite and study the Vedas,
And performest *neoli karm* and kundalini yoga,
But of the five* thou art not rid.
Rather hast thou become all the more tightly bound
By the chains of egoism.

That is not the way to union, O friend;
Innumerable actions did I perform.

*Lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment and egoism.

At last at the door of the Lord have I fallen,
And yearn for the sense of discrimination.

I remained silent, used my hands as a plate,
Wandered naked in jungles,
Roamed around sacred places
And all over the earth,
But delusion I could not cast off.

With desires in my mind, I lived in holy places
And got my head cut off by the sacred saw;
But like this the dirt of mind is removed not,
Even with millions of efforts.
By giving in charity gold, women, horses,
Elephants, food, clothes and land,
Access to the Lord thou canst not find.

Ever engaged in worship, in sprinkling sandal water,
Bowing and lying prostrate,
And performing the six actions,*
Thou art all the more tightly chained by egoistic ideas;
To union this is not the way.
In vain tried I the eighty-four postures
Of yogis and siddhas.†
They brought me long life,
But being born again and again,
In no wise was I nearer God.

* Acquiring knowledge, imparting it to others, receiving charity, giving charity to others, performing sacrifices (*yagya*) and having sacrifices performed by others.

† Persons who have achieved eight kinds of miraculous powers – the power to become very small, very big, very light and very heavy, the power to go anywhere, to get great strength, to have command over all, and to attract and control anyone.

Rivalries of kings, their pomp and show,
 Their undisputed authority,
 Their indulgence in sensual pleasures,
 Their scents and lavenders –
 These lead to infernal hell.

Singing of God's praise in the saints' society
 Is the highest of all the deeds.
 Says Nanak, he alone obtains it
 Who is predestined to receive it.

Thy slave, O Lord, is inebriated
 With this love of thine.
 The Destroyer of the anguish of the meek
 Has become merciful unto me,
 And this soul of mine is imbued
 With the Lord God's praise.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.641-42

Thus one cannot attain salvation through external rites or by performing religious deeds such as going on pilgrimages, giving things and money in charity, keeping fasts, and bathing in holy pools or rivers, nor by yoga practices and postures. Nor does indulgence in sensual pleasures bring us true happiness. Real happiness or bliss and salvation are found only by the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga in the company of true mystics. In the path of spiritual realization, nothing avails but the subtle Shabd; other practices cannot take us into the purely spiritual realms.

e. Rishis and munis

Now unless we go into the predominately spiritual planes beyond Brahm or Om (Trikuti), which we can do by Shabd Yoga alone, we cannot control the mind. That is the reason why so many

rishis and munis of old times were carried away by temptations and fell. The Puranas of the Hindus are full of stories to this effect.

Shringi Rishi is said to have practised austerities for eighty-eight thousand years. He renounced the world, gave up substantial food, and lived only on fruits and leaves of trees. King Dasharath wanted to call him to perform a *yagya*, a sacrificial ceremony, but he refused to come. Ultimately a prostitute succeeded in tempting him, with the result that she had children from him; she was the one who brought him to Dasharath's palace.

Rishi Vishwa Mitra was the Commander-in-Chief for Shri Ram, and performed austerities or *tap* (तप) for sixty thousand years, but he was tempted by Menaka, from whom Shakuntala was born – the play of which name is staged these days in the theatres.

Parashara Rishi spent practically the whole of his life in doing yoga. After becoming a perfect yogi, he was returning home. On the way he had to cross a river by boat, but as the boatman was eating his meal, his daughter Machhodari offered to take him across. When the boat was in midstream, the rishi felt tempted by the beauty of the girl and could not resist. He expressed his low desire to her. She objected that she was the daughter of a fisherman and therefore emitted a foul smell from her mouth. By using his supernatural power, the rishi made her give out sweet fragrance. Then she said that the sun god could see them, and if they did the bad deed, he would bear witness against them on judgement day. The rishi threw up a handful of water and created mist all around. Then she said that the water god was watching them. He turned the river water into a dry bed. He thus wasted his spiritual power but could not control his mind.

Narad Muni was looked upon as the greatest of all rishis and munis, but even he fell. A girl arranged to hold a *swayamvar* (स्वयंवर), the ceremony in which the girl selects a husband for herself. Narad was tempted to seek her hand, so he approached the god Vishnu and asked for a beautiful face. But he gave him

the face of a monkey. He, however, thought he had been given a charming, bewitching face. The girl, of course, could not select the monkey-faced man. When later he looked at his reflection in water, he came to know the real state of affairs, and got into a rage against his deity. It is extremely difficult to curb the mind and overcome temptations.

Durbasha Rishi was called Shri Krishna's Guru, but even he was tempted by Urvashi. Machhandra, the head of the yogis, did not fare better, and fell victim to the temptation of enjoying the luxuries and sensual pleasures of kingship. Gorakhnath, his great disciple, was in the same boat.

Vishisht Muni says to Shri Ram: "If a man claims that he has lifted the Himalayas, then although it is impossible, yet for a moment I may believe that he has done so. If a man says that he has drunk all the water of the ocean, then although it is not possible to do so, yet I may believe it....But if a man says that he has controlled his mind, then I cannot believe him." The most difficult thing in the world is bringing one's mind under control. There is only one antidote for it, and that is Shabd; mind can be controlled by Shabd Yoga alone.

8 Concluding

The root of all karmas (actions) is in Trikuti or Brahm or Om, which is the second region for Shabd mystics. Our true home is Sach Khand, where alone we have real salvation, which is the fifth region. Therefore karmas, which finish at the second region, cannot take us beyond into higher planes. Only Shabd can do that, for it emanates from that fifth region and is in essence the same as Sat Purush.

Shabd is in reality; karmas are in delusion. We should try to reach absolute reality, we should keep a high ideal before us, and we should try to return to our true home in Sach Khand. And there is no way to the Supreme Lord except Shabd.

ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਦਿਸੈ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

Ever existeth my Lord,
And by Shabd practice is he seen.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.509

We can see God with our inner eyes through Shabd alone, but our attachment to the world and our vanity do not let us go to Shabd mystics.

ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ਅਤਿ ਅੰਨ੍ਹਾ ਬੋਲਾ ॥
ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਸੁਣਈ ਬਹੁ ਰੋਲ ਘਚੋਲਾ ॥

Very blind and deaf are the worldly minded;
For Shabd they heareth not,
But ever gropeth in darkness and delusion.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.313

If we do not seek Shabd, we remain ignorant and within phenomena, and cannot find true reality.

ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਸੇ ਅੰਨ੍ਹੇ ਬੋਲੇ ਸੇ ਕਿਤੁ ਆਏ ਸੰਸਾਰਾ ॥

Who knoweth not Shabd is blind and deaf;
What did he come into the world for?

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.601

Our birth in this world is useless, as is our stay here, if we do not attain self-realization through Shabd.

ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਭਿ ਕੁਝੁ ਗਾਲੀ ਹੋਛੀਆ ॥

Save Nam is all else false and worthless.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.761

ਸਾਕਤ ਨਰਿ ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਕਿਉ ਪਾਈਐ ॥
ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਆਈਐ ਜਾਈਐ ॥

How can the worldly minded find Surat Shabd?
Without Surat Shabd one keepeth coming and going.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1042

So long as we do not practise Surat Shabd Yoga, we remain within the cycle of birth and death. It is only by means of Nam that we swim across this ocean of phenomena and maya.

ਜੈਸੇ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਕਮਲ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਮੁਰਗਾਈ ਨੈ ਸਾਣੇ ॥
ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੇ ॥

As in water the lotus keepeth dry,
As also do the wings of the duck,
By Surat Shabd do thou cross
The ocean of phenomena,
By uttering his Name, O Nanak.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.938

Shabd Yoga takes us out of the gloom of ignorance and delusion and lands us in the transcendent reality of Sach Khand, which is our true home. We cannot go out of the prison of Kal and find true salvation without Shabd practice; no other action of ours, whether good or bad, can ever take us beyond phenomena.

ਜਗਤੁ ਉਪਾਇ ਤੁਧੁ ਧੰਧੈ ਲਾਇਆ ਭੁੰਡੀ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਈ ॥
ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਜੁਐ ਹਾਰਿਆ ਸਬਦੈ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥

Getting birth in this creation,
Thou art engrossed in worldly affairs;
Rotten work dost thou perform.
In vain thy valuable life dost thou lose,
For thy soul hath not found Shabd.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1155

CHAPTER THREE

Guru

1 Need of a Guru

We have seen that Anahad Shabd is the way to God, but Shabd we cannot get except through initiation by a perfect mystic adept of Shabd Yoga. Hence such a Guru is the first requisite. A Guru is most essential to mystic training. If other factors are wanting, they may be supplied, but if the Guru is wanting, nothing else is of avail. Without the mystic adept, there is no meaning in a mystic practice or a mystic school. They both depend for their existence and efficacy on the Guru.

A mystic school is not to be judged by its tenets or principles of belief only, but essentially by its adept and his internal spiritual reach. If the Guru is perfect and his reach the highest, his school is the best of all; but if the Guru is imperfect, that school and its practice can never yield true transcendent knowledge or bliss, howsoever nice and good its doctrines may be. Without a proper guide, we can know nothing of mysticism; nor without this transcendent help can we take a step inside on the subtle planes.

a. Common sense

To learn an art or in fact anything whatsoever, two factors are essential: one is exertion, movement or practice, and the other

is the way, direction, or method. If we want to go to a place, we can never reach it unless we move; if we want to lift a stone, we can never do so unless we exert; and if we want to learn an art, we cannot learn it unless we practise. Similarly, effort is essential for mystic transport; without practice we can never go into transcendent regions and spiritual planes.

But mere hard work is not enough. Unless the practice is along the right lines, it is not only useless, but may prove positively harmful. Supposing we want to go to the railway station and begin moving very fast. If unfortunately we have taken that direction which leads away from the station, then the more we move, the farther we shall be from our destination. Our strenuous effort defeats its own purpose.

If we want to lift a stone, but instead of exerting upwards we apply all our force downwards, then the more we strain and exert, the deeper will the stone sink down into the earth. Similarly, if we want to learn an art but begin practising in the wrong manner, then the more we practise, the worse we will become. Thus it is absolutely necessary that the practice be carried out on the right line and in the proper way.

We must make sure of our ideal and the means to achieve that ideal before we begin our efforts to realize it. Movement or practice by itself is blind force; to be productive it has to be directed in the right channel. It is as essential to be sure of the way as to be earnest in our effort; nay, it is more important to be sure of the path we take.

And for this second factor we must go to the masters of the trade, for they alone can acquaint us with the easiest and best way of reaching our goal. Hence, for learning the mystic practice, it is not enough that we begin the thing earnestly and enthusiastically; we must go to some perfect mystic adept, who may tell us how to do the practice. Without this instruction and internal help, we shall never move towards our goal. If we try to advance

by ourselves, the more we practise, the farther we are liable to go from our ideal.

ਆਪਣ ਲੀਆ ਜੇ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਿਛੜਿ ਕਿਉ ਰੋਵੈਨਿ ॥
ਸਾਧੂ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਰਾਪਤੋ ਨਾਨਕ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਣੈਨਿ ॥

If by ourselves could we find union (with God),
Why should we have suffered the pangs of separation?
Nay, only through mystics do we realize him, O Nanak,
And experience true rapture.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.134

Hence we should first of all search for a true Guru. If we succeed in finding him, we will have done the most important thing, for then the adept will look after us and lead us to the right way. Once a Perfect Guru takes us into his fold, he is responsible for our salvation and union with the Supreme Being. As we follow his instructions, with his external and internal help we shall advance in the direction of spiritual realization.

When we stand in need of a guide even for our ordinary crafts and everyday pursuits, certainly we need a guide for learning mysticism. If we cannot acquire efficiency in any art or trade without a competent teacher, how can we have mystic transport without a master? A teacher is a necessity in every department of life. Mysticism is the most difficult, most urgent and most important of all human activities. Where else do we stand in need of a teacher, if not here?

Moreover, does it stand to reason that we, who are dying of thirst, shall insist on digging a well for ourselves and refuse water offered by our friends and well-wishers? Shall true and earnest seekers, who are dying for God, refuse help so kindly offered by mystics? We who want to dig our own well for drinking water are not thirsty yet; we who do not care to embrace the opportunity

of learning spiritual intuition from contemporary mystics are not keen or desirous yet. Of course, for those who do not want mystic insight, a Guru is not needed, but he is indispensable for those who are athirst for this divine nectar.

قد لعلىٰ او بجز عاشق نداند هیچ کس قیمت یا قوت داند جسم گوهر بارما

Save the lover, none knoweth the worth of that ruby;
The value of the sapphire
My discerning eye alone doth know.

GOYA, *DIVAN-I GOYA*, P.11:2

Moreover, Shabd or Nam is a transcendent entity that cannot be conveyed through language. Therefore, we cannot obtain it from books. Without a competent contemporary Guru, it is impossible to catch hold of Nam.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ਨ ਪਾਏ
ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਐਸੀ ਬਣਤ ਬਣਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Without Satguru none can get Nam;
The Lord hath himself thus designed (the universe).

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1046

b. Mystic testimony

Thus for mystic progress, the adept is indispensable. Mystics lay the greatest stress on this point, and they know. They know the ins and outs of the path; they are therefore in a position to speak on the matter; their testimony is reliable. As with one voice they assert the indispensable need of a Guru, we have no reason to disbelieve them. All mystics tell us over and over again that without a Guru no one can know God; he himself has willed it so.

ਧੁਰਿ ਖਸਮੈ ਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਇਆ ਵਿਣੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਚੇਤਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

The Most High himself hath ordained:
Without Satguru he cannot be contemplated.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.556

God has made this rule himself, that without a mystic adept we cannot cross the ocean of phenomena.

ਮਤ ਕੋ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲੈ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਉਤਰਸਿ ਪਾਰਿ ॥

Let man not remain in delusion in the world;
Without a Guru shall no one ever go across.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.864

There are no exceptions; without a Guru none can realize God.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Without Satguru no one ever found God;
Without Satguru no one ever findeth him.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.466

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਇਹੈ ਜਨਾਈ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਭਾਈ ॥

Says Nanak: God hath revealed this to me –
Without Guru no one getteth salvation, O brother.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.864

Mystics of all religions emphasize the indispensability of the mystic adept. Without the Guru we remain inwardly blind.

گر عیاں خواہی ز خاکِ پائے ایشان سرِ مہ ساز زانکہ ایشان کور مادر زاد را نمیش کنند

If seekest thou sight, apply thou
The collyrium of the dust of his feet,
For even to those born blind doth he give sight.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I KEBIR: BAHAR-I REMIL*, M8A:343

We are all blind, for our inner eyes are sealed. But if we go to the mystic adept, he will open our inner spiritual eyes and show us absolute reality. All of us, men and women, rich and poor, wise and unwise, young and old, Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists, Christians and Jews, Indians and Englishmen, Americans and Germans, Chinese and Japanese – all stand in need of the mystic adept. Alone and unaided no one can secure access inside to subtle spiritual planes or go beyond the delusion and darkness of this world of phenomena or maya. Not to speak of human beings, even the great gods Brahma and Shiva stand in need of a Guru.

गुर बिनु भव निधि तरङ्ग न कोई। जौं बिरंचि संकर सम होई ॥

Without a Guru none can cross the ocean of the world,
Be he even as great as Brahma and Shiva.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS*, 7:92 (ख):3

If even such great personages require the help and guidance of a mystic adept, then where is the person who can do without a Guru?

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਦਾਤੇ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਪਾਏ ॥ ਲਖ ਕੋਟੀ ਜੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਏ ॥

Without the gracious Guru, none findeth the Lord,
Even though one performeth millions of actions.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1057

By good actions we may be rewarded after death, but actions cannot take us beyond good and evil into absolute reality. For that, we need a mystic adept of Shabd Yoga. To come across a true Guru and be accepted by him into his fold is the highest good luck that can fall to the lot of anyone in this world.

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ॥
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धाश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥

Even hearing of God is not the luck of many;
Even hearing of him many know him not.
The mystic who telleth of him is a wonder,
And able and wise is he who attaineth him.
But only a few with the help of a mystic adept
Do indeed find him.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:2:7

Without a Guru we cannot know God, for he is beyond human intellect.

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्त्यणीयान्दतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥

This spirit of God cannot be understood
If the instruction cometh from an uninitiated person,
Howsoever hard thou mayest ponder.
So long as instruction from a mystic adept
Thou dost not get,
Him thou canst not find;
For too subtle is he for the grip of reason.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:2:8

Not only any special mystic but all lay stress on the necessity of instruction from a Guru.

श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद्दृशेभ्य आचार्याद्धैव ।
विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठं प्रापतीति ॥

From people as revered as my spiritual teacher
Have I heard that without initiation by a Guru
In the path of self-realization,
One cannot attain the goal of mystic life.

CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD IV:9:3

Not only is it impossible to know God without the help of a mystic adept, but without his protecting hand, it may be dangerous to make an attempt at going into subtle regions. In this path many are the temptations to lead us astray, many the pitfalls to drag us down. Without a knowledgeable one to guide us, we are sure to lose our way and fall into the quagmire of delusion and danger.

پیر را بگوئیں کہ بے پیر ایس سفر ہست بس پُر آفت و خوف و خطر
ہر کہ او بے مرشدے در راہ شد اوز غولان گمرہ و در چاہ شد
گر نباشد سایہ پیراے فضول پس ترا سرگشتہ دارد با نگ غول
غولت از رہا گلند اندر گزند از تو دای تدریں راہ بس بدند

Find thou a mystic guide,
For beset with dangers, perils
And troubles is this journey.

RUMI, MASNAVI I:2943

Whosoever without a Master ventureth on the path,
The evil ones lead him astray,
And cast him into the well (of misery).

RUMI, MASNAVI MAULANA RUM I, P.308

If over thy head the protecting hand of thy Guru
 Thou hast not got,
 Devilish doubts shall forever keep thee
 Perplexed and puzzled.
 Many a man wiser than thyself
 Tried to go on this path,
 But Satan led all of them astray.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:2946-2947

If we have no Guru, we cannot find the way. Therefore our first concern in life should be to find a perfect adept. Only through him can we know God.

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.

BIBLE, *I JOHN* 2:23

But if the mystic adept accepts us as his disciple, then through him God also accepts us as his own.

He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

BIBLE, *MATTHEW* 10:40

ਗੁਰੂ ਕੁੰਜੀ ਪਾਹੂ ਨਿਵਲ ਮਨੁ ਕੋਠਾ ਤਨੁ ਛਤਿ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਤਾਕੁ ਨ ਉਘੜੈ ਅਵਰ ਨ ਕੁੰਜੀ ਹਥਿ ॥

Guru is the key, man the lock,
 Mind the chamber, and body the roof.
 Without the Guru, mind's door cannot be opened,
 O Nanak,
 And none else hath the key.

GURU ANGAD, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1237

Therefore whosoever seeketh the light of reality should first search for a mystic adept to show him the path.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गपथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

Arise, awake, and learn quickly;
Find the mystic who hath transcendent knowledge;
For sharp as a razor's edge, difficult to tread,
And hard to traverse is that path, say the seers.

KATHA UPANISHAD 1:3:14

Moving along the inner mystic path is indeed like walking on the edge of a sword, but the true Guru teaches us how to achieve it.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

This learn thou by falling at his feet,
By mystic practice and service,
For the Guru who hath transcendent knowledge
Of the essence of things
Will in true wisdom instruct thee.

BHAGAVAD GITA IV:34

If we want to have true wisdom and transcendent knowledge, if we want to have insight into truth and reality, if we want to see God and to know the essence of his being, we should seek a Perfect Guru.

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्समिन् पाणि ॥

For knowing that, to Guru should he go.

MUNDAK UPANISHAD 11:9

Without a Guru we cannot know God; this is the one profound truth of life. All religious books lay stress on the necessity of a Guru.

ਸਾਸਤ ਬੇਦ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਭਿ ਸੋਧੇ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਬਾਤ ਪੁਕਾਰੀ ॥
ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਕੋਊ ਪਾਵੈ ਮਨਿ ਵੇਖਹੁ ਕਰਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥

Shastras, Vedas and Smritis – all have I studied;
All say the same thing.
Without Guru none findeth salvation;
Think, O my mind, and know.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.495

In fact, without a Guru's help we cannot move even an inch on the intricate path of the astral, causal and higher spiritual planes. There are so many snares and temptations inside, and they are so complicated and subtle, that without a Guru it is impossible to go across them safely into the purely spiritual planes. All great mystics warn us on this point.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਘੋਰ ਅੰਧਾਰਾ ॥

Without Satguru all is pitch dark.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1275

A Guru means one who shows us light in the dark. It is with his help and guidance that we can pass through pitch darkness and cross all dangers and difficulties that beset the inner mystic path.

ਬਿਖੜੇ ਦਾਉ ਲੰਘਾਵੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ

The intricate snares my (Beloved) Satguru
Maketh me overcome.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1185

Satguru it is who saves us from all snares and pitfalls. Mystics cry from house tops that if we want true spiritual bliss, we should devote ourselves to the Guru.

ਸੰਤਹੁ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਜਨ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਿ ਕਾਢੀ ਬਾਹ ਕੁਕੀਜੈ ॥
ਜੇ ਆਤਮ ਕਉ ਸੁਖ ਸੁਖ ਨਿਤ ਲੋੜਹੁ ਤਾਂ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਰਿਨ ਪਵੀਜੈ ॥

O saints listen, listen ye brethren,
With raised arm the Guru calleth out:
If spiritual bliss keenly dost thou desire,
Then with Satguru do thou take shelter.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1326

The Guru is the haven that offers refuge to the ship of our life when the winds and storms of adversity overtake it in this ocean of phenomena.

ਗੁਰੁ ਜਹਾਜੁ ਖੇਵਟ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਤਰਿਆ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਪੁਭੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

Guru is the ship, and Guru is the captain of the ship.
Without Guru none crosseth the ocean of the world.
By Guru's grace do we find the Lord;
Without Guru is no salvation.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1401

In the world we experience only maya or phenomena, but mystics open our inner eyes and in a moment of transcendent consciousness show us absolute reality, infinite and eternal.

چشم روشن کن ز خاکِ اولیا تا به بینی زابتدا تا انتها
سر مه کن تو خاکِ این بگزیده را هم بسوزد هم بسازد و دیده را

Enlighten thou thine eyes
 With the dust of the mystic's feet,
 So that all from beginning to end
 Mayest thou behold

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM* IV, P.321

Apply thou the collyrium of the dust of the feet
 Of the accepted one,
 So that thine eyes, which see phenomena
 May look on reality.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* IV:3375

Without a Guru we only grope in the darkness of delusion
 and ignorance.

ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਘੋਰੁ ਅੰਧਾਰੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਮਝੁ ਨ ਆਵੈ ॥
 ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਨ ਸਿਧਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Without Guru is utter darkness;
 Without Guru thou knowest not;
 Without Guru ignorant is the soul;
 Without Guru salvation thou canst not have.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1399

Without a Guru, neither study, nor ritual, nor prayer, nor wor-
 ship, nor simran, nor dhyān, nor recital – nothing is of much use.

ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਮਾਲਾ ਫੇਰਤਾ, ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਦਾਨ ।
 ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਭ ਨਿਸ਼ਫਲ ਗਯਾ ਬੁਝੈ ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ।

Without Guru countest thou the beads of thy rosary,
 And without Guru dost thou give in charity.

O, go thou and consult the Vedas and Puranas;
Without Guru charity is forbidden.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.15:1

If we have no Guru, our religious performances and benevolent deeds are of little value. If we are anxious to open our inner eyes and have direct realization of truth, we should leave aside all external religious practices and seek a perfect mystic adept who may teach us the way of internal ascent of the soul into realms ethereal and divine.

یا علی از جملہ طاعات راہ برگزین تو سایہ خاص اللہ

O Ali, above all religious observances,
Choose thou the protecting care
Of the chosen ones of God.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2965

These chosen ones, these mystics, take us up into spiritual planes, where we cannot go by ourselves.

یار باید راہ را تنہا مرو از سر خود اندرین صحرا مشو

Oh, go not alone on this path;
Take thou a guide.
Oh, enter not this desert
Relying on thine own resources.

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM* I, P.312

The unknown transcendent regions are for us like a vast desert; we should not set off in a desert all alone without a proper guide. Moreover, without the helping hand of the Guru, we cannot control our passions and desires, and without curbing the mind, we cannot have true bliss or absolute knowledge.

یچ نکشد نفس راجہ ز ظن پیر دامن آں نفس کش راخت گیر
 ظن اواندر زمین چون کوه قاف روح او میرغ بس عالی طواف
 بس برو خاموش باش از انقیاد زیر ظن امر شیخ اوستاد

Save Guru's shade (protection)
 Nothing else curbeth thy mind;
 Cling fast to the garment of that mind curber.
 Like the mountain Qaf,
 Guru's shade stayeth on earth,
 But high up in the heavens
 Like the phoenix soareth his soul.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:2528, 1:2961-2962

So go and sit thou quiet and obedient
 At his feet.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

This is the way to realization – to sit at the feet of the mystic adept.

c. *Historical evidence*

History is replete with instances to show that without a Guru none can tread the inner spiritual path.

ਭਾਈ ਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥
 ਪੂਛਹੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੇ ਨਾਰਦੈ ਬੇਦ ਬਿਆਸੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

Without the Guru can be no knowledge, O brother;
 Ask thou Brahma, Narad and Ved Vyas.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.59

As stated in the Shastras, Narad – who is considered as the mind of God – was refused admission into Vishnu's palace because he had

no Guru; he then had to adopt a Guru. Shukhdev Swami, the renowned son of Ved Vyas, had transcendent knowledge at birth, but without a Guru he could not proceed on the inner mystic path and had to adopt King Janak as his Guru.

Nowhere in history do we come across a person who received inner light without a Guru. Even those great Masters who are born with this light, who have mystic insight from birth, go to a Master for initiation. So for those who haven't this insight – and practically most of us come in this category – a Guru is indispensable. Even incarnations like Ram and Krishna adopted a Guru and set an example for us to follow.

राम कृष्ण सों बड़ा, तिनहू तो गुरु कीन्ह ।
तीन लोकके वे धनी, सो गुरु आगे अधीन ॥

Who were greater than Ram and Krishna?
Even they adopted a Guru.
They were masters of the three worlds,
(But) before the Guru were they low.

KABIR, *KABIR SAGAR, SUMIRAN BODH*, P.55

If a Guru's presence is not needed, why should Guru Nanak have appointed a successor? And why should all other great mystics have done the same thing, as far as it was possible? It is evident from all considerations that a Guru is essential for inner spiritual realization.

2 Definition of Guru

a. *Guru has realized Sat Purush*

Now, who is a true Guru? It is the person who has realized the Supreme Being and who can consequently take us also to our Heavenly Father. Therefore, that mystic is a true and perfect adept who in spiritual transport has reached the supreme stage of Sach

Khand and gone beyond all relativity and delusion. Unless one has attained that high spiritual stage of Sach Khand and realized and known the absolute Lord, one should not be called a Guru.

ਸਤਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਤਿਸ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਿਖੁ ਉਧਰੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਉ ॥

Who hath realized Sat Purush,
Satguru is his name;
In his company art thou saved,
By singing his praises, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.286

The praises of the Lord are not to be uttered by the tongue, but by the soul in the transport of divine revelation. It is only the realized soul that can chant heavenly hymns and play the divine music of God.

b. One with God

A true mystic adept is one whose soul has, in the superconscious rapture of mystic transport and at the transcendent stage of the ultimate absolute, become identical with God. The true adept has realized union with the Supreme Being and in that union finds bliss and beatitude.

ਅਬ ਹਮ ਤੁਮ ਏਕ ਭਏ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੈ ਦੇਖਤ ਮਨੁ ਪਤੀਆਹੀ ॥

Now am I one with thee,
And beholding this oneness
Is my mind pacified.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.339

Guru is one with God; by attaining the last stage of transport, he has merged in the absolute Lord and become one with him.

ਅਕ ਤਤ ਜਾੜ ਚਢੇ ਸਿੰਘਾਸਨਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਹੈ ਸਾਰਿੰਗਪਾਨੀ ।
ਹਮ ਕਕੀਰਾ ਏਕ ਭਯੇ ਹੈ ਕੋੜ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥

Now have I ascended the throne,
And nectar hath the thirsty found.
God and Kabir have become one,
And none can distinguish ('twixt the two).

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.969

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father....Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

BIBLE, JOHN 14:9-10

ਗੁਰ ਮਹਿ ਆਪੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਕਰਤਾਰੇ ॥

God hath put himself in the Guru.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1024

When the mystic crosses all regions of phenomena and maya, and attains the transcendent being of God, he becomes identical with him, so to speak. The drop falls into the ocean and becomes that ocean.

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਦੁਈ ਏਕ ਹੈ ਬਿਬ ਬਿਚਾਰ ਕਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥
ਜਲ ਤੇ ਉਪਜ ਤਰੰਗ ਜਿਉ ਜਲ ਹੀ ਬਿਖੈ ਸਮਾਹਿ ॥

God and his mystics are one –
Of this have no doubt –
Like the wave which riseth above the water
And mergeth into it again.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, DASAM GRANTH, P.59

As Guru is in essence God himself, so advanced disciples look on the Guru as the representative of God on earth: they feel that his hand is the hand of God, and all that he says is the word of God, and all that he does is the will of God. It is not he; God works in him.

دستِ پیر از غائبان کوتاه نیست دستِ او جز قبضهٔ اللہ نیست
 پس مرادستِ دراز آمد یقین برگزیده از آسمان ہفتمین
 باکش در یائے کل اتصال ہست پیوں و چگونہ کمال
 در بشر و پوشِ کر دست آفتاب فہم کن واللہ علم بالصواب

The hand of the Master is not withdrawn
 Even from those far from him.
 His hand is naught but the grasp of God.

Very long is his hand;
 It reacheth above the seven heavens.

It is one with the Absolute Ocean,
 And transcendeth all limitations.

The Lord is hidden in each person;
 Understand, if ye can; God knows best what is right.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2975, II:1919, V:879, I:2964

Outwardly the Guru is a human being, but inwardly the Guru is God, the manifested embodiment of the spiritual essence.

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
 गुरु साक्षात् परंब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः ॥

Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu,
 Guru is Maheshwar (Shiva);

Verily Guru is Parbrahm (God) manifest.
To that Guru do I offer my homage.

SRI GURU GITA, SKAND PURANA 58

In the mystic shines the lustre of the Lord, but we see only the external human form and therefore do not know that inwardly, in essence, Guru is God.

نور حق ظاہر بود اندر ولی نیک ہیں باشی اگر اہل ولی

The light of God manifesteth itself in mystics;
Thou shalt see it well if thou be of pure heart.

RUMI, MASNAVI MAULANA RUMI, P.39

We do not recognize the great mystics, but they come into the world to open our inner eyes and teach us transport, or rather it is God himself who appears in human garb.

ਮੌਲਾ ਆਦਮੀ ਬਨ ਆਯਾ, ਓਹ ਆਯਾ ਜਗ ਜਗਾਯਾ ।

God cometh in the form of man;
He cometh to awaken the world.

BULLEH SHAH, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

ਹਮਰੇ ਭਰਤਾ ਬਡੇ ਬਿਬੇਕੀ ਆਪੇ ਸੰਤੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ॥

How discerning is our Lord;
Himself as saint is known.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.476

آں پادشاہ اعظم در بستہ بود محکم پوشیدہ دل آدم یعنی کہ بر در آمد

That great Lord hath put himself
 Behind fast closed doors;
 Then concealed in the cloak of man
 He cometh to open the door.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.136

God is hidden within the human form; he appears as the
 Guru to make himself manifest.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਕਿਆ ਕਹਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਸਤੁ ਸਰੁ ॥
 ਓਹੁ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦੀ ਜੁਗਹ ਜੁਗੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ॥

How can I praise Guru,
 The ocean of truth and discernment?
 From eternity to eternity is he ever the perfect God.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.397

One great truth that mystics come to know by their tran-
 scendent transport into the realm of absolute spirit is that God
 and Guru are identical; their inner being is one.

ਸਮੁੰਦੁ ਵਿਰੋਲਿ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹਮ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਇਕ ਵਸਤੁ ਅਨੂਪ ਦਿਖਾਈ ॥
 ਗੁਰ ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਭਾਈ ॥

By churning the ocean of the body,
 A marvel have I beheld:
 Guru is God and God is Guru;
 'Twixt them is no difference, O Nanak.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.442

Thus all mystics assert clearly and emphatically that there is no
 difference between Guru and God. Both are in essence the same,
 absolutely one, now and forever, without a shadow of doubt.

c. Question of rivalry

Now the question arises: Are these mystics not rivals of God? Their place in the ladder of spiritual ascent and divine glory is not short of the very highest pinnacle. They identify themselves with the Most High and consider their own existence as one with the Supreme Being.

Ordinarily when a person says, "I am God", we consider him to be either a fool or a knave. But we can't say this of mystics. Then what do they want? Do they want to dethrone the Almighty and take his place as lords and masters of all creation? Have they any rivalry or antagonism with God? Are they his enemies? Do they rebel like Satan against his authority in order to get the upper hand? This is a serious question to consider.

Now one thing is obvious. As they praise God and worship him and tell us to look up to him, they are not his enemies. They say they come into the world to unite us with God, and they teach us the method of devotion to him. Thus it is evident that they are in no way opposed to God. Then what do they want to do? What is their aim? Their lives show that they have no ambition to possess power and pelf, nor do they seek the lordship of the universe, nor the rule of creation. No, they want nothing; they have no desire; they are above desire and want. Then what is their position?

They are not rivals of God to be sure; they are rather his most ardent and devoted lovers. They are dear to him as a child is dear to its mother; they are loved by him as a child is loved by its father; they are looked after by him as a child is looked after by its loving parents. It is a relationship of love and devotion that culminates in their inseparable union with the Most High; it is the mutual spiritual magnetic attraction of transcendent love that blends the two into one.

Through love, mystics are one with God; they are his children, so to speak. They are loved by him as no one else is; they sit

on his right hand. No, they are little children of the Almighty; therefore, they lie in his lap and have things done by him as does a dear child by his parents.

اولیا اطفال حق انداے پر غائبی و حاضری بس باخبر

Mystics are the children of God, O dear one;
In presence and in absence,
Ever are they under his eyes.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:79

They have no desire apart from the desire or will of God; there is complete accord and harmony between them; nay, there is perfect identity, for love levels all differences and distinctions and makes the lover identical with the beloved.

जब मैं था तब गुरु नहीं, अब गुरु है हम नाहिं ।
प्रेम गली अति साँकरी, ता में दो न समाहिं ॥

When I was, God was not; now he is, and I am not.
Too narrow is the lane of love for two to be together;

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.44:10

This 'I', the ego or the individual self, has drowned its finite existence in the infinite being of the universal supreme Beloved. Through love has the human being become God.

तूँ तूँ करता तूँ भया, मुझ में रही न हूँ ।
वारी तेरे नाम पर, जित देखूँ तित तूँ ॥

By calling out for thee have I become even thyself,
And in me is left no 'I'.

Oh, to thy Nam do I sacrifice myself,
For whichever way the eye looketh,
Thee it beholdeth.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.90:37

In intense love, but one life pulsates in the two lovers, but one heart throbs. It is the same thread of existence that binds both and turns them into one indivisible spiritual entity. Mystics are all love; their being is soaked in love. Love is the prop of their life, the staff of their existence. They have joined themselves to God by its hoops of steel. What rivalry or jealousy can there be in such a relationship of love? There can be no question of it.

When mystics become absolutely one with God, there is no second to feel jealous. In one there is no room for rivalry, no scope for opposition or antagonism. Mystics love God; mystics give up all their desire and seek only God. All their desires are consumed in the far-reaching flames of love, and they come out transparently pure as genuine sterling gold. Their inherent worth shines forth, for all the superficial dirt is washed away by the flood of love.

This inherent worth, this essence and being of the soul, is a drop of the same ocean of which God is the source or fountain-head. The spirit is the same in all of us; none of us is different from him, but alas, we know it not, we have not realized it.

एक समय बन में बसते मृगराज की नारि ने केहर जायो ।
कर कारण पाली के हाथ, परयो उन लेकर छैली के संग रलायो ॥
भूल गयीं कुल के प्राक्रम सो हंडू भयो हरि दूब चरायो ॥
ऐसे ही सुन्दर आत्म संग शरीर के आप भुलाय के जीव कहायो ॥

At one time living in the forest,
The female of the king of the animals (the lioness)
Gave birth to a cub.

By chance it fell into the hands of a shepherd,
 Who mixed it among the sheep.
 Forgetting the ways of its (own) family,
 The cub behaved like the sheep and fed on green grass.
 Like this in the company of the body, O Sundar,
 The soul forgetting itself hath come to be called a man.

SUNDARDAS, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

When that cub was being brought up by the shepherd as one of the sheep, a lion passed that way, and wondered how the young one of his own kind had become mixed in with the sheep, which are their food. He roared and asked the cub to do likewise. The cub also roared. All the sheep and the shepherd fled away. Then the lion took the cub to a pond and showed him their reflections so he could see that they were similar. The cub thus realized that it was not a sheep, but a lion.

This is an allegory. Our mind is the shepherd, and our senses are the sheep. Our soul is the cub, who has come from Sat Purush. Our mind has mixed up the soul with the senses and body. We are now under the control of the mind and feed on grass, that is, hanker after things of this world, and are slaves to the passions.

The mystic adept who comes from Sat Lok is the lion. He roars and makes the cub also roar, that is, he has opened the reverberation of Anahad Shabd in himself and he manifests this resounding music in us too. That drives away the sheep and the shepherd, liberating the soul from the mind and the senses. Then he takes us to Mansarovar, the spiritual pond in Parbrahm, and shows us our reflection there, the true real form of the soul, and thus makes us realize that we are not human beings, but spirit, and one with God.

The Lord is within us, but we are blind, we do not see him. One who has opened his inner eye and beheld this transcendent oneness is a true mystic and worthy of our love and devotion.

सब घट मेरा साइयाँ, सूनी सेज न कोय ।
बलिहारी वा घट की, जा घट परघट होय ॥

In every heart abideth my Lord;
Empty is none.
All praise to the person
Who hath made Him manifest within.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.106:5

Soul and God are eternally one; mystics have realized it, we have not; mystics have seen it, we are blind. And this is not to be known as we know ordinary things with the senses or the intellect; it is to be known and seen by the spirit; it is through mystic transport alone that we can realize our identity with God. And where oneness reigns supreme, the question of rivalry is an idle question.

But with our limited understanding we can form no idea of this spiritual, transcendent oneness. This unity is beyond the comprehension of the frail human intellect. Only during mystic transport does the soul know it; only in a rapturous moment of eternal consciousness shines that light of transcendent Oneness. On the human level we cannot grasp it.

When Kabir was questioned whether God was one or more than one, he answered:

एक कहौं तो है नहीं, दुई कहौं तो गारि ।
है जैसा तैसा रहो कहहि कबीर पुकारि ॥

If I say he is one, that he is not;
But if I say, (existeth) a second,
It is an insult (to him).
So leave him as he is, saith Kabir.

KABIR, *KABIR SAMAGRA*, P.356

Those who realize him and see him know that he is at once one and more than one. We, however, cannot understand it, for it is against the laws of logic. But we should not forget that logical laws are the laws of thought and not of things. These laws are the limitations under which our mind works; they do not characterize objective reality. If reality transgresses these laws, it does not mean that that reality does not exist; it only means that our limited intellect cannot comprehend it. Mystics' insight penetrates deep and so they know that profound reality. But what such paradoxical statements of mystics really mean is a mystery to the layperson. This mystery can be solved only through mystic transport, and transport is impossible without an adept. Thus all depends on the Guru.

d. Shabd Adept – True Guru

Now we are told that the world is full of gurus and they are so numerous that we can hardly find as many disciples as there are gurus. Unfortunately there is much truth in this statement. The world abounds with false gurus, so much so that even the true one is taken for a hypocrite. People do not trust him.

A burnt child dreads fire. Having once been deceived by a false guru, we hesitate in believing even the true one. Our sad experience of the past makes us over-cautious and too suspicious. Sham gurus have set us on our guard with a vengeance and we do not care to go even to the real mystic adept. And if we go at all, we do so with our mind already biased against him. Our mind is not a clean slate, where the right impression may be made. We see the true mystic also through the coloured glasses of our prejudice and read him wrongly. This is our ill luck.

However, we cannot remain deceived for long. If we happen to come in contact with a real mystic, sooner or later his company is bound to reveal his greatness. His glory and grace shed on us a wonderful lustre of bliss and beatitude. The clouds of suspicion and

doubt are dispersed by the rising sun of his truth and transcendent spirituality. In the radiance of his heavenly light, no room is left for the shadow of mistrust. His sweet words, soaked with the ecstatic rapture of divine illumination, pierce our hearts and penetrate deep into our very souls, and we are truly vanquished.

(1) Search is necessary: True greatness cannot remain hidden forever; it must come out. But as there are so many hypocrites, various people argue that either the true Guru does not exist, or at least the search is futile. As it is difficult to find him, they say, we should make no effort at all.

But this is a very wrong way of reasoning. If our diamonds and rubies are mixed up with worthless pebbles and pieces of glass, shall we throw all of it away merely because it is difficult to pick out our real diamonds? Not at all. Even for the sake of one precious jewel, it is worthwhile searching through a million pieces of pebble and glass. And it will not be done in vain.

Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 7:7

If we are sincere and earnest in our search, the true Guru will come to us of himself and show us the right path. What is lacking is not something in the mystic adept, but in us. We have no deep desire; we lack earnestness and keenness. We go on worldly pursuits with zeal and ardour and strive against all hope of success. If we search for the mystic adept with the same keenness and enthusiasm, there is no reason why we should not succeed.

Whether difficult or easy, it has to be done. Nothing in life is worth doing, if not this; if a true mystic adept is not to be sought, what else is? We must search, and search with all our heart. Then

God will certainly be merciful and out of his infinite grace and bounty send us a true Guru.

(2) *Comes to take us home:* As Shabd Yoga is the best mystic practice, and Shabd the real essence of God, so a Shabd adept is the true Guru – one who has identified himself with Shabd and God and can transport us to Sat Lok, the absolute stage, which is our true home. Thus the true Guru is one who can, through the path of five melodies, take our soul up into Satnam and show us our real home within us.

In the beginning our soul descended from that stage into this physical creation. The mystic adept comes down from that true home of the soul and leads us back to our Heavenly Father. Guru Nanak gives the definition of a true Guru thus:

ਸਲੋਕ ਮਹਲਾ 1

ਘਰ ਮਹਿ ਘਰੁ ਦੇਖਾਇ ਦੇਇ ਸੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸੁਜਾਣੁ ॥

ਪੰਚ ਸਬਦ ਧੁਨਿਕਾਰ ਧੁਨਿ ਤਹ ਬਾਜੈ ਸਬਦੁ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥

ਦੀਪ ਲੋਅ ਪਾਤਾਲ ਤਹ ਖੰਡ ਮੰਡਲ ਹੈਰਾਨੁ ॥

ਤਾਰ ਘੋਰ ਬਾਜਿੰਤ੍ਰ ਤਹ ਸਾਚਿ ਤਖਤਿ ਸੁਲਤਾਨੁ ॥

ਸੁਖਮਨ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਰਾਗੁ ਸੁਨਿ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਮੰਡਲਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥

ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ ਬੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਮਨਸਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਉਲਟਿ ਕਮਲ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਭਰਿਆ ਇਹੁ ਮਨੁ ਕਤਹੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਅਜਪਾ ਜਾਪੁ ਨ ਵੀਸਰੈ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਸਭਿ ਸਖੀਆ ਪੰਚੇ ਮਿਲੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ ॥

ਸਬਦੁ ਖੋਜਿ ਇਹੁ ਘਰੁ ਲਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਾ ਕਾ ਦਾਸੁ ॥

Who showeth us our home within us,

He is a true Guru, perfect and all-knowing.

The ringing and resounding of five melodies,

This reverberation of Shabd is the sign.

All realms and spheres, heaven and the netherworld,
 All stages and planes, all marvel;
 (For) exquisite and wondrous
 is the transcendent music
 That playeth before the true throne of the Lord.

Listen to the melody in Sushmana,
 And concentrate thy soul in the realm of Sunn.
 Meditate on the Unutterable Utterance (Shabd)
 And drown thy desires in thine own mind.

When the lotus of thy heart turneth upwards,
 With nectar is it filled,
 and then thy mind wandereth not.
 The Unrepeated Repetition (that endlessly flows)
 It doth not forget,
 But mergeth in it forever from eternity to eternity.

All devoted souls merge in the five (melodies),
 And Guru's devotee findeth abode in the real home.
 Who search through Shabd findeth this home;
 Nanak is his slave.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1291

Thus a Perfect Guru is one who can take us safe through all
 the intervening stages up to Sach Khand, our true home.

ਜਿਨਿ ਤੁਮ ਭੇਜੇ ਤਿਨਹਿ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜ ਸੇਤੀ ਘਰਿ ਆਉ ॥

The one who sent you to this world
 Has now recalled you;
 Return home with peace and joy.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.678

(3) *Teaches Shabd practice:* Shabd is the real thing, the essence and being of God; therefore, the one who can manifest this divine melody in us is a true Guru.

शब्द कमावे सो गुरु पूरा। उन चरनन की हो जा धूरा ॥
 और पहिचान करो मत कोई। लक्ष अलक्ष न देखो सोई ॥
 शब्द भेद लेकर तुम उन से। शब्द कमाओ तुम तन मन से ॥

Who giveth thee knowledge of Shabd,
 He is a Perfect Guru.
 Become thou the dust of his feet.
 Seek not thou any other proof,
 Nor scan thou his merits and defects;
 But by getting the secret of Shabd from him,
 Devote thyself to the practice of Shabd, heart and soul.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 13:1:2-4

A Shabd adept is a true Guru – again and again it is mentioned in the Adi Granth and other books of saints.

ਸਬਦੁ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ॥ ਸਰਬ ਕਲਾ ਸਾਚੇ ਭਰਪੂਰਾ ॥
 ਅਫਰਿਓ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ ਸਦਾ ਤੂੰ ਨਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਤਿਲ ਨ ਤਮਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Knowledge of Shabd doth the Perfect Guru give;
 Full of all power and truth is he,
 And is ever in bliss, above all care and anxiety,
 Beyond all desire and anger.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1021

Through Shabd practice the mystic adept has attained the absolute transcendent stage, beyond good and evil, above desire and worry. Shabd is the real criterion. If we come across a true Guru, he will not ask us to go on reading or reciting, nor tell us to perform

any rites or rituals. He will not set us to externals, but teach us the internal method of Shabd Yoga and open that divine music in us.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ॥ ਵਾਜੇ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਅਨਹਦ ਤੂਰਾ ॥

Who hath a true Satguru, O Nanak,
Within him resoundeth the Anahad melody.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.393

A true Guru gives us Shabd and only Shabd. Although Shabd is within us, yet without the help of an adept, our soul cannot come in contact with it. The key to transport lies with him, and thus in his hands are all treasures of spiritual planes.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਆਨੇਗਾ ॥ ਨ ਵਸਤੁ ਲਹੈ ਨ ਚੁਕੈ ਫੇਰਾ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹਥਿ ਕੁੰਜੀ ਹੋਰਤੁ ਦਰ ਖੁਲੈ ਨਾਹੀ
ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰੈ ਭਾਗਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਣਿਆ ॥

Without Shabd is darkness within,
So he receiveth not his goods,
Nor leaveth he the cycle of birth and rebirth.
In the hands of Satguru is the key,
And none else can open the door.
By highest good fortune alone is the Guru found.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.124

The treasure that we should secure in this world is Anahad Shabd or Bani, but we cannot obtain it by ourselves. The key to this transcendent treasure is with true Gurus.

ਅਨਹਦ ਬਾਣੀ ਪੁੰਜੀ ॥ ਸੰਤਨ ਹਥਿ ਰਾਖੀ ਕੁੰਜੀ ॥

Anahad Bani is the goods, but with saints is the key.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.893

This is what the true Guru does for us. He applies the key of his mystic insight and opens the door of Shabd within us.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਏ ॥ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਏ ॥

The true Satguru maketh thee listen to Shabd;
Remain thou in deep devotion (to him) day and night.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1055

If we are fortunate enough to find and be initiated by a true Guru, then he will manifest this transcendent current of Shabd in us and, by transporting our soul to transcendent planes, show us all spiritual treasures and jewels that are in us and lead us to realize self and God.

ਰਤਨੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਘਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ ਪੂਰੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ ॥
ਗੁਰੁ ਪਰਸਾਦਿ ਮਿਟਿਆ ਅੰਧਿਆਰਾ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਆਪੁ ਪਛਾਨਣਿਆ ॥

When the Perfect Guru made me listen to Shabd,
Jewels within myself did I find.
By the grace of my Guru all darkness disappeared,
And dawned the inner light of realization.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.129

This Shabd, which gives us the treasure of self-realization and the jewel of bliss, and which is also called Nam, cannot be obtained by *siddhas* – devotees who have mastered miraculous powers – because they do not have a Shabd mystic as their Guru.

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਸਿਧ ਸਾਧਿਕ ਰਹੇ ਬਿਲਲਾਇ ॥

Without a Guru Nam cannot be had;
Siddhas and others pined for it in vain.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.115

Absorbed in Shabd, Guru is like a ship for our souls to cross the ocean of phenomena and maya.

ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਹੈ ਕਲਿਜੁਗ ਬੋਹਿਥੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੁ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਵੈ ਜਿਨਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

Who mergeth himself in Nam, he is a Satguru;
A ship is he for Kaliyug.
Who devoteth himself to him,
Goeth across (the ocean of the world),
And findeth the truth within.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.552

(4) *Is infallible*: The Master in all mystic traditions is regarded as the most perfect being – *insaan al-kaamil*, the perfect human – because he is spiritually one with God. As such, one could say he is as much above error as God himself.

ਭੁਲਣ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਅਭੂਲੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥

All are liable to err, but infallible are Guru and God.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.61

To err is human; no human being is perfect. But a Guru is human only to look at; in his inner being he is one with the Most High, and therefore he possesses all the attributes and qualities of God.

(5) *Has curbed the passions*: By virtue of having reached the stage of the absolute Lord, and attained an indissoluble union with him, the Guru goes beyond all the weaknesses that flesh is prone to. He has curbed all his passions and desires.

ਸੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਜਿ ਸਚੁ ਧਿਆਇਦਾ ਸਚੁ ਸਚਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਇਕੇ ॥
ਸੋਈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਨਿ ਪੰਜੇ ਦੂਤ ਕੀਤੇ ਵਸਿ ਛਿਕੇ ॥

A Satguru is he who meditateth on truth,
And the true Guru and Truth are one.
Verily he is a Satguru,
Who all the five foes hath controlled.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.304

A Guru has curbed the five enemies of all humans: lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment and egoism – *kam* (काम), *krodh* (क्रोध), *lobh* (लोभ), *moh* (मोह), *ahankaar* (अहंकार).

(6) *Is free*: The Guru is free from all entanglements and has escaped from the prison, so to speak.

روح ہائے گرفتار ہارستہ اند انبیاء و مرشدان ہارستہ اند

Who hath found a way out of the cage,
That soul alone deserveth
To be called Prophet and Murshid.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:1542

(7) *Is beyond good and evil*: The Guru has merged his self in the being of the absolute Lord, so he has gone beyond good and evil, beyond pleasure and pain.

ہر کہ آید پیش ایشان خوش بود آب حیواں گردگر آتش بود

Whatsoever cometh to him is turned blissful;
Even the scorching fire is turned
Into life-giving water.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Thus we should find a person who has by means of Shabd practice reached the ultimate stage of the absolute, who has in a

rapture of divine ecstasy become one with Shabd and God, and who in consequence is able to take us also to that highest realm by making the Shabd manifest in us. He who can unite our soul with the subtle transcendent Shabd of the highest stage is indeed our true Guru.

3 Living Guru essential

Now the question arises: Is a living Guru absolutely essential? Can the mystics of the past not help us through their writings, their lives and their spiritual power?

It is very difficult to recognize great people in their own lifetime, but when they become personages of the past, the verdict of history is generally reliable. Very seldom are great people recognized and appreciated in their own day. In fact, true mystics have as a rule been rather ill treated by the world at large.

In his own time Guru Nanak was called a *kuraahia* (ਕੁਰਾਹੀਆ), one who leads others astray, and was not allowed by people to enter their village, but now he is recognized by everybody as a very great personality. Socrates was given poison to drink for 'corrupting' and misleading people, and Jesus Christ was crucified for similar reasons. Hardly any great man is admired in his own age.

Thus, so long as people are living, it is difficult to find out whether they are truly great or otherwise; their worth is known only after their departure from the world. Therefore, is it not best to depend on personages of the past, whose greatness is well established and admitted by everybody?

It seems very plausible indeed to do so, but the question is: Can great saints of the past open up transport for us and give us transcendent knowledge? Can our faith in Guru Nanak, for instance, and our study of his life and writings, take us into the realm of transport? Can our faith in other mystics of the past such as Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammad, Lord Krishna, Gautama

Buddha, Saint Kabir or Soami Ji show us transcendent truths? Can our faith in any of the earlier mystics manifest Shabd in us now and show us true light? These are the questions.

Now it is obvious that books and lives of great saints of the past have an enormous influence on us. By reading about their lives, we are inspired to follow in their footsteps, we imbibe a desire to attain their high stage of transcendent insight and supreme bliss. By studying their writings, we come to know of their high teachings and we learn rules and principles which would, if acted upon, make us also great and saintly. We cannot deny the great and immense value of such a faith and study. However, the question is not whether mystics of the past can help us in making our lives pure and holy, and in arousing a desire in us to be great, but whether or not they can give us access to transcendent planes and unite us with Shabd and God.

a. Seek the mystics' company

If we want to follow the writings of earlier mystics truly and properly, then we should first of all search for living mystics, attend their discourses and come under their benign influence, because all mystics lay stress on this point. The company of true mystics has a marvellous effect on us.

ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਮੁਖੁ ਊਜਲ ਹੋਤ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਮਲੁ ਸਗਲੀ ਖੋਤ ॥
 ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਮਿਟੈ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਸੁਗਿਆਨੁ ॥
 ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਬੁਝੈ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਨੇਰਾ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਭ ਹੋਤ ਨਿਬੇਰਾ ॥

By the company of sadhs (mystics),
 Radiance cometh to one's face;
 By the company of sadhs, all dirt is removed;
 By the company of sadhs, vanisheth our pride;
 By the company of sadhs,
 True knowledge doth appear;

By the company of sadhs, appeareth God near;
By the company of sadhs, cometh true liberation.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.271

(1) *Give them your devotion:* We are asked by the previous mystics not only to seek the company of the mystics of our own time, but also to serve them and give them our love and devotion.

ਚਰਨ ਸਾਧ ਕੇ ਧੋਇ ਧੋਇ ਪੀਉ ॥ ਅਰਪਿ ਸਾਧ ਕਉ ਅਪਨਾ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਧੂਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਊਪਰਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਕੁਰਾਬਾਨੁ ॥

Drink thou by washing the feet of mystics;
Offer thou thy life to them.
Bathe thou with the dust of their feet;
Sacrifice thou thyself to them.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.283

As mystics are one with God, they are worthy of our devotion. Just as we humble ourselves before the Almighty, so should we before the perfect mystics. Thus alone can we learn from them the true path of spiritual transport.

ਸੰਤਾ ਕੀ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਸਰੀ ਏਹੁ ਅਚਾਰਾ ਸਿਖੁ ਰੀ ॥

Be thou a slave to mystics;
Learn thou this mode of life.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.400

Mystics are truly gracious and benevolent. Whoever falls at their feet is saved. We should therefore devote ourselves to them with our heart and soul.

ਤਨੁ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਧਨੁ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਮਨੁ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ॥
ਸੰਤ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਸਰਬ ਕੁਸਲ ਤਬ ਥੀਆ ॥

ਸੰਤਨ ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦਾਤਾ ਬੀਆ ॥
ਜੋ ਜੋ ਸਰਣਿ ਪਰੈ ਸਾਧੂ ਕੀ ਸੋ ਪਾਰਗਰਾਮੀ ਕੀਆ ॥

To mystics belongs my body,
To mystics belongs my mind,
To mystics belongs my wealth.
By mystics' grace have I meditated on God's Nam
And found all peace.
Save mystics there is no other giver of gifts.
Whoever cometh under their protection,
To higher realms is he transported.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.610

Without devotion to mystics, spiritual enlightenment is impossible. Without love for them, we cannot rid ourselves of worldly attachment, selfishness and egoism; and without removing these from our mind, we cannot experience transport or find Shabd. Therefore we are told, he alone can find inner light:

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ॥

Who is deeply devoted to God,
And to Guru as to God.

SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD VI:23

But devotion and love have little meaning except with reference to a person we can come in contact with; our Guru must be a contemporary mystic. We should not depend on our own cleverness; for in the path of inner realization, worldly wisdom is of no consequence. We should take refuge with the mystic adept of our own day who has inner wisdom and divine power.

مکمل از عنبر ایام خویش تکیه کم کن بر فن ویرگام خویش

O break not thou with the prophet of thine own day;
 O place not thou thy reliance
 On worldly possessions and thine own wisdom.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* IV:542

If we do not find a living Guru, our life shall be wasted, for we shall never be able to obtain spiritual goods and mystic insight.

در خدائے موسیٰ و موسیٰ گریز آب ایماں را بفرغونی مریز

O run thou towards God
 And seek thou shelter with Moses (Master);
 Through thy pride and egoism, lose not thou thy soul.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:781

Mystics tell us repeatedly and emphatically that the path to God is through love.

ਸਾਚ ਕਹੈ ਸੁਨਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ, ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

Truth do I utter; let all hear.
 Whosoever loveth, he alone findeth God.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *DASAM GRANTH*, P.14

But for love and devotion, we need a living Guru; without a Guru of our own time we cannot have true love, nor find inner light.

बिन गुरु वक्त भक्ति नाहिं पावे । बिना भक्ति सत्तलोक न जावे ॥

Without a Guru of the time,
 Devotion thou canst not get;

And without devotion,
To Sat Lok thou canst not go.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:44*

Thus for going beyond phenomena and maya to Sat Lok, to our true home of spiritual bliss, devotion to a living Guru is essential.

(2) *Love is mutual and reciprocal*: Moreover, true love is always reciprocal. If there is no love in the heart of the beloved, there can be none in that of the so-called lover.

عشق اول در دل معشوق پیدا می شود

Love first appeareth in the bosom of the beloved.

RUMI, IN *NUKAT-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.93

Love is a mutual attraction – *kashish-i jaan-i bain* (کشش جان بجان) – it can exist only between persons who come in contact with each other, who are on the same plane of existence. Therefore love for a Guru has no meaning except love for a contemporary Guru, living now in flesh and blood, whom we may come in contact with, whom we may see, talk to and be able to love, and who may love us in return. Hence, as love for the Guru is essential, it clearly means that a living Guru is essential.

b. Mystic instruction is transcendent

Further, mystic knowledge cannot be conveyed through language or writing. It is transcendent, and requires for its attainment direct contact with a living mystic adept. We may read, think or talk about it, but we can never get the actual instruction, the Shabd, which is the real teaching of the true Masters, unless we receive it from a living personality.

When this transcendent current of spirituality wants to work on the physical plane, it manifests itself as a human being, for in its true essence it is too subtle to be tangible at the physical level. That person in whom the spiritual current of Shabd is manifest now is a contemporary living Guru, and he alone can awaken transport in us.

When a mystic leaves the body and goes away from this world, his soul does not keep wandering from form to form; it flies up to spiritual planes and becomes one with Shabd and God. For doing work again on the physical plane, that power has to manifest itself in another human body. In all true mystics, the spirit that works through them is the same, and that spirit is Shabd. Whether it manifests itself in one person or more than one at the same time is immaterial, but it must express itself in a physical human form if it is to work on the physical plane.

Shabd is such that it cannot be uttered by the tongue, nor heard with the ears; it cannot be put into words, nor recorded in books. Therefore, books cannot give us mystic learning; they contain an account of Shabd, but Shabd is a thing apart; and as the true teaching of mystics is this transcendent Shabd, their knowledge goes direct from soul to soul without the medium of language.

شیخ فعال است بے آلت چو حق بامریداں دادہ بے گفتن سبق

Like God without instruments doth the Guru act;
And without speaking doth he give instruction
To his disciples.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:1323

Mystic lessons are given in higher spiritual realms, where no talk is needed or possible, and where souls come directly in contact with one another.

امیر ربیست روح و سر خداست ذکر بے کام و بے زباں اور است

The essence and secret of God is the soul;
Without tongue and palate doth it talk.

NIYAZ, *DIVAN-I SHAH NIAZ BARELVI*, P.90

In the planes of pure spirit, physical senses are not required;
all dealings there are independent of sense organs and intellect.

ਅਖੀ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਕੰਨਾ ਸੁਨਣਾ ॥
ਪੈਰਾ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਚਲਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਹਥਾ ਕਰਨਾ ॥
ਜੀਭੈ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਇਉ ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰਣਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਉ ਖਸਮੇ ਮਿਲਣਾ ॥

Seeing without eyes, hearing without ears,
Walking without feet, working without hands,
Speaking without tongue –
Thus die while living, O Nanak.
By knowing His will,
You shall find the Beloved.

GURU ANGAD, *ADI GRANTH*, P.139

For journeying in those transcendent regions no legs are
needed; for speaking, no tongue; for flying, no wings.

بے پرو بے پاسفرمی کر دے بے لب و دندان شکر می خوردے

Without wings and without feet
Would I travel;
Without lips and without teeth
Would I relish sweets.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2093

Similarly for hearing no ears are required, for seeing no eyes.

چشم بستہ عالمے میدیدے

With eyes closed would I behold a world.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:2095

Mystics' learning is not acquired; it is directly revealed. It is not knowing; it is seeing; nay, it is becoming. It is for us to become what we want to know, and to know it by immediate inner consciousness, or rather the superconsciousness of mystic transport. How then can it be conveyed through the books or writings of earlier mystics? The very nature of the instruction that is to be imparted makes a living mystic adept indispensable.

c. Can a holy scripture be the Guru?

Although from the reasons given above it is quite plain that for mystic insight and transport we need a contemporary mystic adept, yet as the Sikhs believe in the ten Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak and their holy writings, and deny the necessity of a living Guru, and as other religions also depend on their holy scriptures and the prophets and mystics of the past, we might pursue the point a little further.

(1) *Example of the Gurus themselves:* Firstly, the ten Gurus and other mystics have made it clear by their own course of action that a living adept is essential. When he himself had to go away from this world, Guru Nanak left his charge in the hands of Guru Angad; and similarly in his turn Guru Angad made it over to Guru Amar Das, and so on. Now, if Guru Nanak could take us into transport even after his departure from the physical plane, where was the need of appointing a successor? One mystic would

have sufficed for all time. But it is not so, and that is the reason why true mystics, when they themselves come to depart from this world, generally leave the charge of their school in the hands of another mystic.

(2) *Sikhs' belief*: To this the Sikhs say that as there was no person fit for Guruship after Guru Gobind Singh, so he left the charge with the *Adi Granth*;^{*} and in support of their assertion they quote the following lines:

- First quotation:

ਅਗਯਾ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਤਬੀ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ।
ਸਭ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਯੋ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ॥

This passage they translate like this:

Ordained by the Timeless, the *Panth* I started.
I command the Sikhs
To regard the *Granth* as their Guru.

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF THE PUNJAB, p.161

- Second quotation:

To substantiate this claim further, they quote the following verse from the *Adi Granth*:

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਾਰੇ॥

^{*} The *Adi Granth* contains the mystic writings of a wide range of saints, Hindu and Muslim, including the works of the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak, collated c.1604 by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak. The *Adi Granth* is also respectfully known as 'Granth Sahib'.

This they translate as:

Bani (utterance of the Gurus) is Guru,
And Guru is Bani; in Bani are all nectars.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.982

Thus they believe that the Granth Sahib, which is the compiled utterances of previous Gurus and other mystics, is their present Guru.

(3) *Their interpretation:* Regarding the first quotation, Sikhs understand this to be a saying of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. There is, however, another tradition that says they are the words of Prahlad Singh, later quoted by Bhai Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh in their *History of the Khalsas*.

The saying contradicts not only the teachings of the Adi Granth, but also the writings of Guru Gobind Singh himself, who says:

ਆਦਿ ਅੰਤਿ ਏਕੈ ਅਵਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਸੋਈ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮਝਿਯਹੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

He is the only one form (literally *avtaara*),
The beginning to the end;
I consider Him only my Guru.

GURU GOBIND SINGH, *DASAM GRANTH*, P.1387:385

The word *avtaara* literally means the 'downward current' of God. This downward current in all times is Shabd, which is ever flowing outwards and downwards from the absolute Lord and sustaining all creation. And it is the Shabd that is the being and essence of the Guru.

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Shabd is Guru,
And soul is the disciple of this Melody.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.943

Shabd is our Guru and the person in whom it manifests itself is the manifested form of Guru. That the Adi Granth should be taken as the Guru is a latter-day interpretation. The words of historians are not the writ of God, especially when they contradict the teachings of true mystics. How strange and sad that we do not follow the instructions of the ten Gurus, who were true mystics, but stick tenaciously to the words of historians, who were ordinary mortals and as fallible as any of us! They might have been very learned men, even great geniuses, but certainly for matters spiritual, Guru Nanak and the other great mystics are more reliable than they. All mystics lay great stress on the indispensable need of a living Guru.

Regarding the second quotation, which is from the Adi Granth and therefore reliable and trustworthy, we have only to use the proper and right meaning of *bani* (ਬਾਣੀ) and the thing becomes clear.

Bani (the Shabd) is Guru,
And Guru is Bani; in Bani are all nectars.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.982

As explained at some length in the previous chapter, Bani and Shabd are the same thing. This Bani, which is our Guru, reverberates through all time and space.

ਬਾਣੀ ਵਜੀ ਚਹੁ ਜੁਗੀ ਸਚੇ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇ ॥

Bani resoundeth in all the four yugas
And maketh one hear the absolute Truth.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.35

This Bani exists in all the four yugas – Satyug, Tretayug, Dwaparyug, and Kaliyug – and rings through all space. It is another name for the transcendent Shabd.

ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਣੀ ॥

From age to age existeth Bani,
Known as Shabd or Nam, sweet and dear.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.602

This Bani is our real Guru, and within ourselves do we realize it.

ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰੇ ਸਾਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Within ourselves is true Bani.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.769

This Bani emanates from the inner transcendent flame of the astral plane.

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਚੇ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿਉ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥

Inside (us) is the flame, and in that flame is Bani,
Which createth in us love for the true Lord.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.634

If we listen to this internal Bani, we become absorbed in our divine love for God. This Bani cannot mean any words or writing, songs or hymns. No, it is the subtle transcendent power that permeates every pore of existence and sustains every thread of life. That is our real, eternal Guru, but without a living person in whom it is manifest, we cannot come in contact with it.

This will become quite clear if we look at the second line of the verse by Guru Ram Das:

ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਾਪਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੈ ॥

Bani (utterance of the Gurus) is Guru,
And Guru is Bani; in Bani are all nectars.
The disciple accepts the Guru's instruction,
And the Guru in his manifest form gives salvation.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.982

Bani is our true Guru, no doubt, but we cannot catch hold of it without a living Guru. The two – human Guru and Shabd Guru – are essential, the one putting us in touch with the other.

The Word was made flesh.

BIBLE, JOHN 1:14

But without a Guru now with us in flesh and blood to unite our soul with that transcendent Shabd, we cannot have mystic insight. We cannot catch hold of Shabd by ourselves; for that a living contemporary Guru is absolutely essential.

Some Sikhs do not look upon the Granth Sahib as the complete Guru, but only as a book of laws, giving a code of morals for the community, which has to interpret these laws. Their view about Guru is:

ਗੁਰੁ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੰਥ ॥

Guru is the book;
Guru is the Community.

So far as the Adi Granth is concerned, we have already shown how it cannot be our Guru. Regarding the community, we can

easily see that if one blind person cannot show us the way, how can one hundred or one thousand do it? No amount of ignorance can, by accumulation, become knowledge; no amount of darkness can, by being put together, give us light.

For true mystic light, it is not number that we want, but mystic quality and insight. Even if we find one perfect mystic, he can take all of us into the light of reality and give us access to the bliss of union with the Lord. Books and communities will not do; we need a living mystic adept of our own day to open our inner mystic eyes and show us the spiritual path.

(4) *The mystics tell us to adopt a Guru:* Moreover, the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak state in their writings that we should search for and adopt a Guru who is capable of giving us Truth or Shabd. This obviously means that we are asked by them to accept a living Shabd mystic as our Guru.

ਸੋ ਗੁਰੁ ਕਰਉ ਜਿ ਸਾਚੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਵੈ ॥
ਅਕਬੁ ਕਥਾਵੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਾਵੈ ॥

Adopt thou that Guru
Who instilleth Truth in thee,
Who maketh thee utter the Unutterable
And uniteth thee with Shabd.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.686

Now, it is clearly stated here that we should adopt a Guru. This is given not only at one place in the scriptures sacred to Sikhs, but we are reminded of it numerous times and told to look for a Guru of this description.

ਐਸਾ ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਲੋੜਿ ਲਹੁ ਜਿਦੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਸਚੁ ਸੋਇ ॥

Seek thou a Satguru
Through whom you can find the Truth.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.30

Again and again the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak, and in fact all mystics, tell us to search for a Guru, to find one, to accept and adopt one. What else can it mean, if not a living Guru of our own time, a contemporary mystic adept? Guru Ram Das says that when he sees the form of his Guru, Guru Amar Das, his joy knows no bounds:

ਹਉ ਵੇਖਿ ਵੇਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਵਿਗਸਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੇਹਾ ॥

My heart leaps up when I behold my Satguru –
This body of my Guru, my Satguru!

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.726

Isn't it evident from this verse that love and devotion are to be given to a human Guru, a Guru living among us now in flesh and blood? However, let us for the sake of argument assume for a moment that the Adi Granth is the real Guru. Then shouldn't we follow the advice of this Guru? What does the Granth Sahib say? It tells us over and over again to go to living mystics and get the treasure of Nam from them.

ਜਿਸੁ ਵਖਰ ਕਉ ਲੈਨਿ ਤੂ ਆਇਆ ॥
ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੰਤਨ ਘਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

The merchandise that thou hast come
Into the world to get is God's Nam,
And from mystics dost thou find it.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.283

Do we act upon the teachings of the Granth Sahib? Do we seek out mystics and get Nam from them? Do we go to them at all? No, instead we oppose them. And still we say that we believe in the Granth Sahib and are '*sikhs*', disciples, of the Gurus. We are not true *sikhs*, and until we find a living Guru and are accepted by him, we shall never be true *sikhs*, true disciples.

d. Various lines of Shabd mystics

Further it would be presumptuous and bigoted to say that the ten Gurus were the only mystics that God has ever given us, and that no mystics ever existed before or after them. Was there no true mystic adept before Guru Nanak's time? There must have been, for he himself makes mention of such:

ਸਰਣਿ ਪਰੇ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ॥ ਤੂੰ ਸਮਰਥੁ ਦਇਆਲੂ ਮੁਰਾਰੀ ॥

Under thy shelter have I come,
O my Guru!

The powerful and merciful God art thou.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1031

Now, who is this Guru whom Guru Nanak is addressing?
Guru Amar Das says:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਾਲਾਹੇ ॥ ਅਗਮ ਅਗੋਚਰ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੇ ॥
ਏਕ ਨਾਮਿ ਜੁਗ ਚਾਰਿ ਉਧਾਰੇ ਸਬਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਸਾਹਾ ਹੇ ॥

The devotee of the Guru praiseth Nam,
The transcendent, unfathomable Absolute.
One Nam giveth salvation in all the four yugas,
And it is through Shabd that the Name is gained.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1055

Now if there were disciples of Shabd mystics and the practice of Shabd Yoga in the previous three yugas, there must have been Shabd adepts also. Again, we have:

ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਸੰਤ ਭਲੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤੇਰੇ ॥

From age to age, good are thy saints, O Lord.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1025

ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਪੀੜੀ ਚਲੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ॥

From age to age runneth the line of Gurus.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.79

Gurus remain in the world through all times, so that keen seekers of mystic knowledge may learn from them. It is our prejudice that we limit them to a special period. Before Guru Nanak there were mystics, and after Guru Gobind Singh there have been mystics. Mystics are ever present in the world. If we do not know of them, it is no reason to think that there are none.

ਜਗ ਮੇਂ ਹੋਤੇ ਸਾਧ ਨਹਿੰ, ਜਰਿ ਮਰਤਾ ਸੰਸਾਰ ॥

Had not mystics been in the world,
The world would have been burnt up.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.124:94

It is mystics who save us from the fire of passions and greed, of anger and lust, of treachery and jealousy. Mystics live in the world in all ages. With the divine elixir of their sweet words, they extinguish the fire of our worldly desires; from their Olympian heights, they pour the nectar of their heavenly message on thirsty

humanity below, and by means of Shabd they draw us up to the abode of transcendent bliss.

All this the true mystics do, but they do so for their contemporaries only. Other ages must seek other mystics; each person must find a Guru of his own day. It is only contemporary mystics who can open to our soul the hidden treasures of subtle transcendent planes and transport us to the stage of the ultimate absolute.

There are various lines of Shabd mystics. Guru Nanak's line ended with Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly before him and after him, several mystics started lines that went on for some time, and then came to a stop. Kabir Sahib had his own line; similarly Paltu Sahib, Dadu Dayal Ji, Tulsidas Ji, Jagjivan Sahib, Rumi, Hafiz, Garibdas Ji, Soami Haridas Ji, Shams-i Tabriz, Mansur Hallaj – all these have been perfect mystics of their times. In his book, *Anurag Sagar*, Kabir states that under different names he came down from Sat Lok into this world in the previous three yugas also.

When one line of mystics comes to an end, then a new mystic appears somewhere else and starts another line. He does the same work of taking us out of the prison of Kal (Time) and landing us at the absolute stage of Dayal. However, although we may have no historical record of who the predecessor of a particular Guru was, even those mystics who start new lines must receive light from a Guru. Their lamp may be ready to be lit, but lit it must be.

But alas, we do not search for living mystics, for contemporary adepts, for mystics who are in the human garb now, whom we can see, talk to and love, and who can talk to us and love us. We are content with our faith in mystics of olden times only, those who are no longer in this world, who have finished their work here and gone back to their spiritual home with God.

پے نافرماے رمیدہ بوسند زحمت جستجو

In the withered navels of the dead deer,
From where musk hath flown away,
O seek not thou in vain.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Similarly if we try to awaken our transport with the help of mystics of previous times, we shall try in vain.

e. Different earlier mystics

As so many different mystics have appeared in the world at different times, we notice that each one of them invites us to follow him; each invites us to go to him and give him our devotion; each assures us that under his protection we shall be safe and sure to find the kingdom of God. Christ said:

Come unto me, all...and I will give you rest.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 11:28

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

BIBLE, JOHN 14:6

Lord Krishna said:

मन्मना भव भद्रकृतो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यंते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापे यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Keep thy mind in me, devote thyself to me,
Worship me, and prostrate thyself before me;
I pledge thee my troth:

Thou shalt come unto me, for thou art dear to me.
 Give up all religions and come unto me alone
 for shelter;
 Fear not, I shall liberate thee from all sins....

BHAGAVAD GITA, XVIII:65-66

Also Lord Buddha talked about inner light, and he invited others to come to him to see that eternal light.

Guru Arjun said:

ਜਿਨਿ ਤੁਮ ਭੇਜੇ ਤਿਨਹਿ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜ ਸੇਤੀ ਘਰਿ ਆਉ ॥

The one who sent you to this world
 Has now recalled you;
 Return home with peace and joy.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.678

And in the Qur'an, God says about his messenger, the Prophet:

Listen, our people! Respond to the caller from God and believe in him!

QUR'AN 46:31

Thus in one way or another every mystic invites us to become disciples. Now, because there are so many mystics, a very important question arises.

(1) *Whom to follow:* When we feel the call of a particular mystic, we have to find out whether we should follow him, so that we may be on the right path. We have to decide this question with all fairness, but before we do that we should know why each mystic attracts us to himself. Does he want to increase his

followers to a huge number in order to get fame and glory? And is there a competition among them?

(2) *No competition or rivalry*: No, there cannot be any competition or rivalry in them; nor can they be anxious to earn fame and glory. Their lives and teachings show that they were all above these weaknesses of the flesh. They were true mystics, and their object in life was to benefit others through the light they had with them.

तरवर सरवर संतजन, चौथे बरसै मेंह ।
परमारथ के कारने, चारो धारैं देंह ॥

Trees, pools, mystics and rainfall –
For the good of others alone are these four born.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.169:7

The mystics' advent into the world is not for their own sake, but for the good of others.

(3) *All true Masters are one*: In fact, all true Masters in their inner being become one with God, and thus with one another too. There is no difference between true Masters. Those who consider them as different from one another are in ignorance and darkness.

संत संत को दोई कर जाने । से नर पड़े नरक की खाने ॥

Who among true Masters findeth difference,
Falleth into the pits of hell.

KABIR, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Once a discussion was started as to who was the greater of the two, Guru Nanak or Kabir. Such discussions are in vain, for there is

no difference between the two. Like other perfect mystics, both of them in essence are identical with God and therefore are one. The question of superiority and inferiority does not arise, and our discussions only betray our own ignorance and narrow-mindedness.

Without a competent spiritual doctor to open our internal mystic eyes, like blind people we fight about things which do not exist. This remark applies to most religious disputes for, in the light of absolute truth, there is little room for difference and discord.

All perfect mystics are one; there can be no quarrel among them. They are all true and sincere and when they call people to follow them, they really mean it. Then how is this apparent conflict to be explained?

(4) *The only conclusion:* There is only one possible explanation, and that is that they did not address people of all times; they did not invite us who are living now, as religions assume, but only people of their own times. Each one of these great mystics was capable of opening the inner eyes of the people of his own time, and he actually gave inner mystic vision to those who went to him; but people of other times are out of his sphere of work.

It is a mistake to think that only one mystic came to save the people of all times. Apart from being unreasonable, it smacks of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. The only unbiased conclusion that we can draw from the fact stated above is that each mystic was meant for his own time. Only in this sense can the teaching of all of them be explained and reconciled, and only thus can all of them be true and right. Their message is one, and they do the same work of spiritual enlightenment in different times.

Just as in a school or college, when one teacher goes away, another takes his place and does his work, similarly when one mystic goes away from this world, another comes to continue the same work; but in each age and time, it is the contemporary mystic who does the work, and who can open transport in us.

(5) *Inference for us:* From this we can infer that if we want to follow the directions of any great mystic truly and properly, we must seek a Perfect Guru of our own times who invites us now. He alone can give us the inner path of Shabd. Mystics of the past finished their work in this world and went back to God long ago. We must give our devotion to a living Guru. That is the only way of opening mystic insight; without a contemporary adept, transport is impossible.

Having once been initiated by a Perfect Guru, we need no other Guru, however. Even if the Guru gives up the mortal frame first, his astral form remains with the disciple to help him and take him to the goal.

f. Reasonableness

It stands to reason that if the people of Guru Nanak's time could secure access into spiritual regions with the help of Guru Nanak, the people of Guru Angad's time could do the same with the help of Guru Angad, and so on. This is a universal principle.

For curing our illness we need a doctor of the present time; doctors of old, who died long ago, howsoever efficient they might have been in their own day, will not come now to diagnose our disease and treat us. For settling our quarrels, we must go to the courts and judges of today; old judges, who are no longer living in the world, howsoever able they might have been in their own time, will not come now to hear and decide our cases.

Similarly for learning transport and reaching the transcendent Shabd, we shall have to find a living mystic adept; mystics of the past, howsoever great and perfect they might have been in their own ages, will not come now to give us transcendent light. They have given up their work on the physical plane and now rest in bliss with the absolute Lord.

Shabd is such a thing as cannot be awakened or manifested in us except through an awakened soul working on the same plane

of existence as we are. We are just now on the physical plane, and in the human body; therefore only that mystic can help us in our spiritual uplift and enlightenment who is himself now on the physical plane and in the human body. If he has left this world, he may be doing much work elsewhere, but he is not for us. His place here must be taken by another living mystic.

Keeping to the physical body, we cannot catch hold of subtle, transcendent powers. As human beings, we want Shabd manifested in a human body; but on the astral plane, we shall want an astral Guru; in the causal sphere, a causal Guru; and so on. Before we can come in contact with it, the transcendent Shabd must manifest itself in a being on the same plane of creation as we are. Being human, we cannot touch this Shabd in its transcendent essence; we need it manifested in the same tangible, palpable form in which we are, in the human form. Therefore we need a contemporary, living Guru.

(1) *A Guru of the past means no Guru:* For us the distinction between an incarnate perfect mystic and the absolute Lord is that the former is in a human body. When he leaves the body, he goes to the absolute Lord and merges in him. Then there is no difference between God and that mystic.

Hence if we depend on earlier mystics for our transport, we may as well depend on God straight off, for the two are one. And if we depend on God, that would mean that we deny the necessity of the mystic adept. Therefore, when we talk of the need of a Guru, it can mean nothing else but the need of a living Guru.

A mystic has two forms: his human form on the physical plane when he is living, and his form as God when he goes into the absolute stage, either during transport or after death. Now when we say that a mystic adept is essential for union with God, we do not mean that God is essential for union with God (which obviously we do not mean), so we clearly mean nothing else but

the human form of the adept. And this human form exists only so long as he lives in this world.

It is only the mystic of the time that is manifest in the human form. Hence if we need a Guru (as has already been shown that we do), then it can only mean that we need a living contemporary Guru, a Guru of our own time, and not any one of the earlier mystics, who have left the body and gone to God for good. A living Guru is thus absolutely essential for transport and mystic realization.

(2) *Faith in earlier mystics imaginary*: Lastly, when we have faith in a mystic of the past, it is all subjective and imaginary. We never really establish any relationship between ourselves and that mystic. He never tells us whether he accepts us as his disciple or not. If we leave him and go to another, neither the first says anything nor the second; neither the former rejects us, nor does the latter accept us. They never say anything; it all depends on our own sweet will and fancy.

If we go against the teachings of our so-called Guru, a mystic of the past, he can never tell us not to do so. We may do anything we like; there is no objective control and thus there is no relationship. It is only in our imagination that we are the followers of so-and-so. All our beliefs and actions are determined by our own mind; there is nobody to check that mind; there is no external control on us.

(3) *True faith only in a living adept*: It is only the living Guru that can have a hold on our mind, set it right and stop it from going astray by objective control. We fight among ourselves for our religions and faiths, but if we had the light, we would not fight. True faith can exist only in a living Guru, who gives us that inner light and stops all our religious quarrels and disputes.

We have each one of us our theories and ideas of God, but the real truth is different from all these theories. Those who behold

the light of truth find all their quarrels ended. We waste our time and energy in verbal discussions. Far better to give up such discussions and seek a living mystic adept who may open our inner eye and give us true knowledge and real faith. Then all our disputes would end and all our differences be bridged.

(4) *True Gurus rare, but they exist:* It is not any particular mystic who can unite us with the Lord; any perfect adept of Shabd Yoga who is living now can do that. True Gurus are rare in the world, but they do exist. They are ever present and it would be our highest good luck if we were to come across one. But we must make a search for a contemporary Satguru who alone can give us light.

ਜਿਸੁ ਜਲ ਨਿਧਿ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਤੁਮ ਜਗਿ ਆਏ
ਸੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥

With the Guru is the nectar
Which thou hast come into the world for.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.598

4 Being and manifestation of Guru

a. *Shabd – the real essence of Guru*

As already said, a Guru is not a person; his real being is transcendent; his true essence is Shabd.

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Shabd is Guru,
And soul is the disciple of this Melody.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.943

GURU

In his outward manifestation as a human being, the Guru may grow old with age, but in his inner essence as Shabd, he never ages. His external body may become old, but his internal being is beyond the changes of phenomena.

ਗਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਢੇ ਕਦੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥

The mystic never becometh old,
For in him hath he transcendent knowledge.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1418

He is human to look at, but in his real being, he deals with spiritual transcendent powers.

چوں بتازند آسمانِ مہتممیں میداں شود چوں نخبند آفتاب و ماہ را بالیس کنند

When he attacketh,
The seventh heaven is his battlefield;
When he sleepeth,
The sun and moon are as his pillows.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I KEBIR: BAHAR-I REMIL*, M8A:337

ایں دہائش نکتہ گویاں با جلیس و اں دگر با حق بگفتار و انیس

With one tongue talketh he to transcendent beings,
And with the other speaketh he to mortals like us.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:3602

Being inwardly one with Shabd, perfect mystics are indeed the sovereign lords of all creation, the absolute masters of all the worlds.

कोटिन जुग परलय गई हमहीं करनेहार ।
हमहीं करनेहार हमहिं करता के करता ॥

Millions of yugas lasteth Dissolution,
But the absolute lord of all am I,
The sole monarch am I,
The creator of the creator am I.

PALTU, *PALTU SAHIB KI BANI*, VOL. I, 177

अंड खंड ब्रह्मंड, कोई करता नहीं ।
हमरा सकल पसार, सार हम से भई ॥

In the whole universe is no other creator;
This is all my manifestation;
I am the origin of everything.

TULSI SAHIB, *GHAT RAMAYAN*, VOL. I, P. 56

من عاشق دیرینه ام من عاشق دیرینه ام
عالم نه بود و من بدم آدم نه بود و من بدم
خدا نه بود و من بدم من عاشق دیرینه ام
مولا چه باشد پیش من من عاشق دیرینه ام

I am an old lover, I am an old lover.
When the world was not, I was;
Adam was not, I was;
Eve was not, (but) I was;
I am an old lover....
What is God before me? I am an old lover.

RUMI, *KULLIYAT-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P. 508

One who is the transcendent lover of the eternal Absolute goes far beyond and above the god of our world. Brahm or Om (ओम्) is the god or creator of this universe of ours, but as already stated, Brahm is only a drop of the final Ocean, Sat Purush (सत् पुरुष). Therefore, the mystic who goes up to the highest absolute

stage of Sat Purush, the Supreme Lord, is the creator of the god of our world, Brahm, and this god of our universe cannot reach the transcendent being of that mystic.

چوں قبولِ حق بود آں مردِ راست دستِ او در کارِ بادتِ خداست

As by God hath that upright man been accepted,
So in all actions,
His hand is the hand of the Almighty.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

In fact God is nowhere else; he is within the mystics.

گفت پیغمبر که حق فرموده است من کلّیچم در بالا و پست
در زمیں و آسمان و عرش نیز من کلّیچم ایں یقینِ داں اے عزیز
در دلی مومن کلّیچم اے عجب گرم راخوئی در اں دلہا طلب

Said the Prophet, God telleth me:
"I live not high nor low –
Believe it, O dear one –
Nor on the earth, nor in the firmament,
Nor in the heavens do I reside.
Wondrous it is! In the heart
Of the believer (mystic) do I live,
And if me dost thou desire,
In his heart do thou seek."

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2653, 2655

When the myna bird is taught to imitate a human voice, a big mirror is placed before it, and a person hiding behind it speaks. The bird sees its own reflection in the mirror and thinks there is

the light of truth find all their quarrels ended. We waste our time and energy in verbal discussions. Far better to give up such discussions and seek a living mystic adept who may open our inner eye and give us true knowledge and real faith. Then all our disputes would end and all our differences be bridged.

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हमरा सकल पसार, सार हम से भई ॥

In the whole universe is no other creator;
This is all my manifestation;
I am the origin of everything.

TULSI SAHIB, GHAT RAMAYAN, VOL.1, P.56

من عاشق دیرینام من عاشق دیرینام
عالم نہ بود و من بدم آدم نہ بود و من بدم
خوانہ بود و من بدم من عاشق دیرینام
مولا چہ باشد پیش من من عاشق دیرینام

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در زمیں و آسمان و عرش نیز من کلّیہم ایں یقینِ داں اے عزیز
در دہلِ مومن کلّیہم اے عجب گر مرا ہوئی در اں دلہا طلب

Said the Prophet, God telleth me:
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Nor on the earth, nor in the firmament,
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Wondrous it is! In the heart
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When the myna bird is taught to imitate a human voice, a big mirror is placed before it, and a person hiding behind it speaks. The bird sees its own reflection in the mirror and thinks there is

another bird of its own kind which speaks. Similarly, God is hidden in the mystic adept behind the garb of a human body and he speaks and acts through that cloak.

آں پادشاہ اعظم در بستہ بود محکم پوشیدہ دل آدَم یعنی کہ بر در آمد

That great Lord hath put himself
Behind fast closed doors;
Then concealed in the cloak of man
Cometh he to open the door.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.136

In his outward appearance, the mystic is human, but his inner soul is one with the Supreme Lord.

صورتش در خاک و جاں در لامکان لامکانے فوق و ہم سالکان

His body is in this material world,
But in the transcendent plane is his soul,
And beyond the imagination of seekers
Is that transcendent plane.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:1581

b. Human form – manifestation of Shabd

Now it is clear that the Guru has two sides or aspects; inwardly he is God, outwardly a human. In his real essence or inner being, he is God; in his external manifestation, he is a human. We can say that he is the ladder that has one end on the earth and the other in the heavens; he is the uniting link between humans and God. Although Shabd is the true essence of the adept, it must put on a human garb to come in contact with human beings and give them instruction. Thus human form is the external manifestation of Shabd on the physical plane.

GURU

Guru, Shabd, and God are not three different entities but only one; they are three forms of the same Supreme Being. This is the true Trinity. If we want to find God, then, because we are just now human and on the physical plane, we need a human form of God, a Perfect Guru. Through devotion to him we shall be able to go above the physical plane and come in contact with his inner being as Shabd. Then by inward devotion to Shabd with our soul, we shall ultimately reach the highest stage, where Shabd is one with the absolute God. But being human at present, we must begin with the human form of God or Shabd, the mystic adept.

c. Guru – door of light

But there is another slight difficulty here. We say that everything on the physical plane exists only in delusion, that in the material creation it is all darkness and ignorance. Now the question arises that if all that we experience in this world – that we see with these eyes, hear with these ears, and perceive with other senses – is delusion and darkness, then the mystic adept and his sermons are also darkness, because they too are within the sphere of phenomena. And as we want light, we should not be attached to darkness.

Now in this we have to look at two issues: firstly, whether Guru and his sermons (or satsang) are really and entirely darkness, and on a level with other dark things, and secondly, what sort of a way to light can there possibly be in this utter darkness of delusion and phenomena?

But before we come to these two points, let us plainly admit that Guru as we see him and his sermons as we hear them are really a part of the delusion and darkness of this place, a part of phenomena. They are darkness no doubt, but there is a difference between this darkness and the other darkness. This darkness leads to light, while all other darkness keeps us within delusion and ignorance. Guru as we see him in his physical form is indeed a delusion, for his true being is the transcendent Shabd, but this is

a delusion that takes us out of all delusion. Guru is that door in the darkness which opens out into light.

All this material creation is a place of utter darkness, and we grope here like blind people for a way to go out. Our various religions and philosophies are known to be so many doors in this dark place. Although all are dark doors, still each professes to be a door of light and offers to lead us out of darkness into transcendent knowledge.

Now a mystic is also a door in this darkness, but as shown at the beginning of this book, the difference between this door and other doors is that this door leads to light whereas other doors keep us within darkness. Philosophy and religion lead us nowhere; they take us only from one part of darkness into another, while mysticism takes us out of the universal darkness of phenomena into absolute truth. All of us are in the utter darkness of maya; only mystics, though outwardly as much in maya as any of us, have inwardly taken their souls into the transcendent light of absolute reality. We are all prisoners of Kal, but mystics are not; they are free beings, and have access to all subtle spheres.

اہل دنیا جنگلی زندانی اند انتظار مرگ دار فانی اند
جز مگر نادری کے مردائے تن بزنداں جان او کیوائے

All worldly people are prisoners,
Awaiting the stroke of death,
Save for that rare brave one
Who in the prison hath his body,
But in heaven his soul.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:3404-3405

Thus, although mystics as we see them are a part of the darkness and delusion of this place, yet we should not call them dark

doors, but doors of light, for they lead us out of delusion into absolute reality. Through our devotion to them, we reach the transcendent light of the spiritual planes.

Let us approach this question from the other side; let us find out what sort of door, which may be called the door of light, we can possibly have in a place which is known to be absolutely dark. If there is a door in it which opens straight out into light, then some of that light is bound to come into the darkness inside, and our place will cease to be utterly dark.

Hence in an utterly and completely dark place, as this world of ours is, there cannot be a door straight to the light. A door straight out, as so many religions and philosophies offer, must necessarily end in darkness. We are looking for a curved door, so that one end of it may be in light and the other in darkness. Mystics alone are such a door, for on one side they are in darkness, in the human form and on the physical plane, but on the other side they are one with the absolute Lord, who is perfect light. Thus mystics are truly doors of light.

5 Grace of the Guru

a. The Guru's advent into the world for our sake

Great mystics descend into this material creation for our good. They leave their abode of true and eternal bliss with the Absolute Being, come down into the lowest plane, and put on the gross material covering only to take us out of darkness and delusion. It is for our sake that they place themselves under the hardships of human life and subject themselves to the necessities of the flesh. In essence, they are one with God, but for our good they become human and live on the physical plane.

People say we should do good to others. What higher good can there be than this – taking us out of the prison of Kal and

the delusion of phenomena altogether and uniting us with the supreme Lord? The mystic adept reveals to us what our real being is and then transports us to our true home in the absolute.

ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਦੁਹਰੂ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਆਏ ॥
ਜੀਅ ਦਾਨੁ ਦੇ ਭਗਤੀ ਲਾਇਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਲੈਨਿ ਮਿਲਾਏ ॥

Beyond birth and death is he,
And for our good doth he come into the world.
Life he giveth us, and devotion he inspireth in us,
And with the Lord doth he unite us.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.749

Mystics come into the world for our sake; the only object of their life is to transport us into subtle stages of pure, transcendent spirituality. Being one with the great Lord, the Guru knows all about us and he uses this knowledge for our good. By every means he tries to lift us up into pure, ethereal realms.

حال تو دانند یک یک موبهو زانکه پر بودند از اسرارِ او

Every inch of thee doth he know,
For keepeth he all the secrets of God.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

By his transcendent divine glory he elevates us and make us fit for spiritual flight.

साध बड़े परमारथी घन ज्यों बरसैं आय ।
तपन बुझावैं और की अपनो पारस लाय ॥

The benevolence of the saint
Is like the dropping of rain from heaven;

With his divine elixir
Doth he soothe the burning pain of others.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.117:1

*b. The Guru looks after his disciples with love
and kindness*

A Guru is an ocean of love and mercy; he treats us most lovingly and guides us on the spiritual path most kindly.

ਜਿਉ ਜਨਨੀ ਸੁਤੁ ਜਣਿ ਪਾਲਤੀ ਰਾਖੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਮਝਾਰਿ ॥
ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਮੁਖਿ ਦੇ ਗਿਰਾਸੁ ਖਿਨੁ ਖਿਨੁ ਪੋਚਾਰਿ ॥
ਤਿਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰੁਸਿਖ ਰਾਖਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਪਿਆਰਿ ॥

As the mother, after giving birth to a son,
bringeth him up,
Ever keeping her eyes on him inside and out,
Putting morsels into his mouth,
Fondling him every moment,
In the same manner doth the Satguru
Keep his disciple with love and endearment.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.168

A Guru's relationship with his disciples is a relationship of great love. Out of his infinite love and kindness he invites us into the mansions of the Lord, recommends us to God, so to speak, and unites us with his subtle transcendent being.

خلق را خواند سوائے درگاه خاص حق را خواند که وافر کن خلاص

To the durbar of the Lord doth he invite people,
And prayeth he to God to grant them pardon.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:1805

He lives for the sake of others; his holy influence transforms other people into saints, just as the philosopher's stone is said to change iron into gold.

آنچه ز می شود از پر تو آں قلب سیاه کیما نیست که در صحبت درویشان است

In the company of mystics is found
The (true) philosopher's stone
That turneth base metals (black hearts) into pure gold.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p.98, 36:5

By their elevating company, wicked people become good and pious, thieves give up stealing, drunkards leave drinking, and all bad persons shake off their badness. History presents innumerable such instances. By the magic influence of the mystics' company, Sadna the butcher, Sain the barber, Ganika the prostitute, Valmiki the robber and many others of this sort turned into saints.

c. The Guru saves us at death and helps us in difficulties

Moreover, if we take refuge with the mystic adept, he will be with us even after our death and save us from pain and trouble.

ਸਜਣ ਸੇਇ ਨਾਲਿ ਮੈ ਚਲਦਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ਚਲੰਨਿ ॥
ਜਿਥੇ ਲੇਖਾ ਮੰਗੀਐ ਤਿਥੇ ਖੜੈ ਦਿਸੰਨਿ ॥

That friend have I with me, O Nanak,
Who goeth with me at my death;
And where one has to render account,
There is he seen standing by me.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, p.729

تاری در دامن آخر زماں دامن او گیر زو تر بے گمان

Dauntlessly, lose no time
 In finding shelter with him,
 So that on doomsday
 Thou mayest from all calamities be saved.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:424

ਨਾਨਕ ਕਚੜਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਤੋੜਿ ਢੂਢਿ ਸਜਣ ਸੰਤ ਪਕਿਆ ॥
 ਓਇ ਜੀਵੰਦੇ ਵਿਛੜਹਿ ਓਇ ਮੁਇਆ ਨ ਜਾਹੀ ਛੋੜਿ ॥

Break off with the false friends
 Of this world, O Nanak,
 And seek thou a saint, thy true friend.
 The former even in thy lifetime desert thee,
 But the latter leaveth thee not even after thy death.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1102

If we have found the Guru, he will save us from trouble in life
 and at our death; he is the best friend and helper we can have.

مہرباں بے رشتہاں یاری کناں در مقام سخت و در دور گراں

Merciful is the mystic,
 For in time of need and at a place of danger,
 Without any reward doth he help us.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

When once a true and Perfect Guru has initiated us, he will
 not leave us till he has taken us to Sach Khand and the lap of
 Satnam. The Guru may pass away from the world, he may cast off
 the mortal frame, but with his astral form and higher spiritual
 essence and power, he remains with his disciples and helps them
 in their inner ascent of the soul.

When once we have been accepted and initiated by a perfect mystic adept or Guru, we need no other Guru during our whole lifetime, even if our own Guru, the one who initiated us, breathes his last and departs from the physical world. That very Guru with his spiritual power will appear in his Radiant Form inside and take us to the final stage.

Out of their own kindness do the mystics save us; their society is indeed the best in the world.

मुद मंगलमय संत समाजू । जो जग जंगम तीरथराजू ॥

The company of mystics bringeth us happiness
And doth us good;
The best holy place is it in the world.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 1:1:4

मज्जन फल पेखिअ ततकाला । काक होहिं पिक बकड मराला ।
सुनि आचरज करै जनि कोई । सतसंगति महिमा नहिं गोई

At once doth the effect of bathing
At this holy place appear,
For crows turn into cuckoos and herons into swans.
None should marvel to hear this,
For the worth of mystics' company is not hidden.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 1:2:1

We are all crows and herons, for we feed on the filth of sensual pleasures. But when we bathe in the holy water of the mystics' company and drink the nectar of their sweet Word, we turn into heavenly swans, eat ambrosia and drink the nectar of transcendent planes. The value of the mystics' company cannot be overestimated.

ہر کہ خواہد ہم نشینی با خدا گوشتید در حضورِ اولیا
 ہم نشینی ساعتِ با اولیا بہتر از صد سالہ طاعتِ بے ریا
 مسجدِ کان اندرونِ اولیاست سجدہ گاہِ نملہ است آنجا خداست

If seekest thou union with God,
 O sit thou at the holy feet of mystics.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:2163

A moment in the company of a mystic is better
 Than a hundred years of sincere prayer.

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM* I, P.101

Inside mystics is a (true) mosque,
 Which is the place of worship for all,
 For God abideth in it.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:3111

Thus God is to be found nowhere else in the world but with mystics alone. They are our true friends, for they do us the highest and most lasting good and they do not forsake us in time of need. We attract many friends in our prosperity, but as soon as adversity overtakes us, our friends drop off one by one. Rarely does a friend keep with us in our misery and misfortune; hardly does a soul stick with us till our death.

Our so-called friends desert us when our stars set, but even at our death mystics do not leave us. They help us in the astral plane with their Radiant Astral Form and save us from the agony of death and the torture of hell. No *yamdoot* (ਜਮਦੂਤ) or angel of death comes to snatch away the soul of the disciple of a true mystic. At our death bed, our kind Guru himself appears in his Radiant Form and conducts the soul safely and comfortably up into the highest realms of transcendent spirituality.

सोना काई नहिं लगै लोहा घुन नहिं खाय ।
बुरा भला जो गुरु-भगत कबहुँ नरक न जाय ॥

As gold never becometh rusty,
Nor is iron ever infested by weevils,
Similarly, good or bad, the devotee of the Guru
Never goeth into hell.

TULSI SAHIB, *SANTBANI SANGRAH* VOL.1, P.214

d. Guru's gift is absolute and eternal

The mystic adept saves all those whom he accepts into his fold. Whatever he does leaves a lasting effect; it cannot be undone by Kal. Whosoever is taken by him under his shelter is sure of salvation and transcendent union with God. Nobody can stop it.

संत डारिया बीज, घट धरती जेहि जीव के ।
को अस समरथ होय, जो जारे उस बीज को ॥
कोई काल के मीहिं वह बीजा अंकुर गहे ।
जब जब आवें संत, अंकूरी उन संग रहे ॥

When a saint (perfect mystic)
soweth the seed of Shabd
In the soil of one's being,
Who is so powerful as to burn that seed?
In course of time that seed must sprout.
Whenever saints come into the world,
The person in whom the seed has been sown
Ever remaineth with them.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 38:7:31-32

The Master remains with the disciple and gives the disciple his devotion till the disciple attains the highest stage of absolute transcendence. No one can destroy that seed; nobody can undo

what true Masters have done, for they are above all; they are the absolute Lord himself.

ਸੰਤ ਮੌਜ ਫਿਰ ਕੋਈ ਨ ਟਰੇ । ਈਸ਼ਕਰ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਕਰ ਸਭ ਹਰੇ ॥

The will of the saint then none can sweep away;
Ishwar and Parmeshwar helpless are both.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND* 38:7:30

The saint is one with Sat Purush; therefore his work cannot be undone by entities lower than him.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਦਾਤਿ ਨ ਮੋਟੈ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਬਖਸੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਤਾਰੇ ਸੋਈ ॥

Guru's gift cannot be removed by anyone;
To whom he giveth, him he saveth.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1030

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਮੋਟੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਹਰਿ ਸੋਇ ॥

Guru's Shabd none can obliterate,
For verily Guru is God himself, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.864-65

In fact God does what mystics like him to do.

ਹਰਿ ਸੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰੇ ਜਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਿਆ ਸੰਤਾ ਭਾਵੈ ॥

God doth what His saints wish.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1076

ਕੀੜਾ ਲੋੜਨਿ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਾਇਨਿ ਦਰਿ ਫੇਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥

Whatever they want him to do, that they get done;
For from that door
are they never sent back empty-handed.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1076

All whom they accept into their fold, they save from Kal and his snares.

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਨਿਬੜਿਆ ॥

Says Nanak, who findeth Satguru,
Cleared is all his account (with Kal).

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.435

ਜਿਨ ਕੋ ਸਾਧੂ ਭੇਟੀਐ ਸੋ ਦਰਗਹ ਹੋਇ ਖਲਾਸੁ ॥

Who meeteth the mystics,
In his court is he liberated.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.134

God is in the hands of mystics, for by the chains of love have they bound him.

اولیاء است قدرت ازاله تیر جسته باز آرنش ز راه

The mystic hath this power from God:
That he can call back from its course
The discharged arrow.

RUMI, MASNAVI 1:1669

Whatever God wants to do, he does it through his mystics;
God has no other agents or officers in this world; it is mystics who are doing his work.

GURU

पलटू घर में राम के और न करता कोय ।
राम समीपी संत हैं वे जो करें सो होय ॥

In the house of God is no other doer, O Paltu;
Saints are close to Ram (God);
Whatever they want to do, that is done.

PALTU, *PALTU SAHIB KI BANI VOL. I, KUNDLI 25*

God is love, and by love do mystics get all their work done
by him. If the mystic adept wants to save a person, no one can
touch him.

ਜਾਮਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੋਇ ਵਲਿ ਲਖ ਬਾਹੇ ਕਿਆ ਕਿਜਇ ॥

What can millions of hands do,
If Guru be on thy side?

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH, P.1399*

ਕਿਤੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਕਰਣ ਕਾਰਣ ਸਮਰਥੁ ॥
ਸੇ ਮਥੇ ਨਿਹਚਲ ਰਹੇ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰਿ ਧਾਰਿਆ ਹਥੁ ॥

What tongue can praise the Guru;
He is the sole monarch,
All-powerful and all-knowing.
If on thy head is Guru's hand,
Then art thou sure of salvation.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH, P.49*

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਰਇਣੁ ਦਯੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਸਿਰਜਣਹਾਰੁ ॥
ਗੁਰਿ ਤੁਠੈ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਦ ਬਲਿਹਾਰੁ ॥

Guru is God, Guru is merciful,
Guru is the real and true Creator.

By Guru's grace receivest thou everything.
(So to the Guru) do thou sacrifice thyself
Hundreds of times, O Nanak.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.218

6 Concluding

اے لقاءے تو جواب ہر سوال مشکل از تو حل شود بے قیل و قال

Thy face, (O Master), is the answer
To all my questions;
And without any talk
Are all my difficulties removed.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:97

ਦਰਸਨਿ ਪਰਸਿਐ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੈ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਦੁਖੁ ਜਾਇ ॥

By looking at the face of Satguru
Is the pain of birth and death ended.

ADI GRANTH, P.1392

Such is the spiritual influence of the Guru! Such is his radiant face, his transcendent being, his divine grace! As the mystic adept goes beyond good and evil, he does not cast us away for our badness though we are weak. He keeps us, his lost sheep, under his loving care, and takes us safely to our home. Out of his own infinite mercy he saves us from a thousand dangers.

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਭੇਟਿਐ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥
ਹਸੰਦਿਆ ਖੇਲੰਦਿਆ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥

If a Perfect Guru dost thou find,
Then would thy (mystic) practice be perfected,

And midst laughing, playing, eating,
And wearing (fine) clothes,
Shalt thou receive salvation.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.522

This does not mean, of course, that we can give our heart to worldly enjoyments and at the same time find God. No, we can do only one thing out of the two, but with our heart set on the inner spiritual reality and soaked with mystic devotion, we may still outwardly take part in all worldly activity. Mystic training aims at turning our mind from the things of the world to God, but it does not touch our outward life unless it clashes with our spiritual uplift. Apparently leading the life of an ordinary mortal, we may in reality be devoted to our Guru and have attained mystic realization.

What is to be reformed is the mind and not the body. A person that seems to be drowned in worldliness may be at heart a true mystic. With a Perfect Guru to guide us, we may change inwardly from a crow to a phoenix and still remain the same in our way of external living, laughing, playing, eating and enjoying as before. This is the bounty of Shabd mystics.

Mystics are the greatest of the great, the purest of the pure, the noblest of the noble. Their greatness is immeasurable, their purity transparent, their nobility profound. They are spiritual, transcendent beings, above all description and beyond all words, one with the ultimate, absolute God.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਕਿਆ ਕਹਾ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਸਤ ਸਰੁ ॥
ਓਹੁ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦੀ ਜੁਗਹ ਜੁਗੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ॥

How can I praise Guru,
The ocean of truth and discernment?
From eternity to eternity is he ever the perfect God.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.397

बंदउँ गुरु पद कंज कृपा सिंधु नररूप हरि ॥
महामोह तम पुंज जासु बचन रबि कर निकर ॥

Homage do I pay to the holy feet of the Guru,
An ocean of grace and mercy,
And verily God in the garb of man;
For removing the utter gloom of ignorance
And worldly attachment,
Like the rays of the sun are his words.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 1, ADI SORATHA 5

श्रीगुरु पद नख मनि गन जोती ।
सुमिरत दिव्य दृष्टि हियै होती ॥
दलन मोह तम सो सप्रकासू ॥
बड़े भाग उर आवइ जासू ॥

The radiance of the nails of the Guru's feet
Dazzleth like the lustre of numerous diamonds,
As seen when divine vision is attained within
By means of holy repetition.
For removing the darkness of delusion
And worldly attachment,
Like the light of the sun is its brightness.
Most fortunate indeed is he
In whose heart is manifest this light.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 1, ADI CHAUPAI 3

The astral form of the Guru is indeed so radiant!

बंदउँ संत समान चित हित अनहित नहिं कोइ ॥
अंजलि गत सुभ सुमन जिनि सम सुगंध कर दोइ ॥

Homage do I pay to the perfect mystic,
 Who hath a balanced mind,
 Who hath no friend nor enemy,
 And who is like a beautiful sweet flower,
 Which when taken in the palms,
 Maketh both the hands equally fragrant.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 1:3 (क)

گرگویم تا قیامت نعمت او بیچ آں را مقطع و غایت مجو

If until Judgment Day I go on praising him,
 Oh, think not thou that this praise will be sufficient.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:2963

As God is the highest of all, the Most High, so are his mystics. If he wants to bestow his highest boon upon us, he sends us a mystic adept. And if we want to benefit by his advent into this world, we should give him all our love and devotion. That is the only way to God.

ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਰਿ ਮਨ ਮੋਰ ॥
 ਗੁਰੂ ਬਿਨਾ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਹੋਰ ॥

'Guru, Guru' do thou utter, O my mind;
 Save Guru none else do I have.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, p.864



CHAPTER FOUR

Devotion

I Introduction

Love is the highest and noblest feeling; it purifies our mind and elevates our being. In all ages, it has been the central theme of human existence. The world would be barren without it, and our life a dull void thing. It is love that charms this short mortal stay of ours, that makes this earthly life worth living. Take it out, and the whole universe is reduced to a dry, lifeless structure, a bony framework, wanting the touch of the alchemy of love to transmute this skeleton into a living entity.

All writers praise this sublime sentiment, all poets sing of it in rapturous ecstasy. It is the spiritual cement that keeps the whole cosmos intact; it is the divine lubrication that makes this complex machinery run smoothly; it is the celestial stream of existence that permeates every pore of phenomena; it is the heavenly blood of life that flows through every vein of this gigantic organism.

It (love) is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind
In body and in soul can bind.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, "THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL" V:13

God is love, they say, and so is our soul. It is through love that we are nearest to God. Love is the deep secret of life, the profound secret of the world, the holy secret of God. Love prompts action, love controls thought, love is the reigning deity of our subconscious life; in all our feelings and doings, love is the predominant force; it is the final urge in all our deeds, the ultimate goal in all our activities.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
Are all but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, "LOVE", CLXVIII

Love is sublime, love is holy, love is divine; love is the sacred flame of God that illumines the dark recesses of our soul. It is the true nectar and elixir that gives us spiritual life; it is the richest treasure under the sun, the highest boon that the Almighty bestows on human beings.

عاشق شوارہ روزے کا رہاں سر آئیہ ناخواندہ نقش مقصود از کار گاہِ مستی

O become thou a lover,
For one day hast thou to leave this world,
And then without achieving the object of thy life
Shalt thou go.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p. 385

a. What is love

But what is love? Who can say? We can give no logical definition of it, for it is a feeling which must be experienced to be known. It is a condition or attitude of the soul – an immediate consciousness – which perhaps cannot be analyzed further. Psychologically,

love is a sentiment made up of several emotions joined together to make a compact whole, but in reality it goes deeper into our being and constitutes the essence of our existence.

Roughly speaking, love is the intense attachment of one person to another. We need not confine love to any particular sort of attachment. Intense attachment, pure and simple, is love. Sexual attachment is not pure love, for it has in it a mixture of lust. And lust and love are poles asunder. One is a divine feeling, the other a passion of the animal self.

Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But lust's effect is tempest after sun:
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain;
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done.
Love surfeits not, lust like a glutton dies;
Love is all truth, lust full of forged lies.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, "VENUS AND ADONIS," 821-826

Love ceases to be pure if there is any ulterior end or motive in it. If we desire gaining some other object apart from the service and company of the beloved and eternal union with that being, then our love is not pure. Love is:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, "TINTERN ABBEY"

Perhaps love may be engendered by thinking about the high qualities of another person, but true love is inspired by love itself. Love is mutual and reciprocal. When the rays of love emitted by the Beloved reach us, are felt by us directly (not through thinking) and pierce our heart, then love is inspired in us too. This is real love, independent of external qualities or attributes, transcending the experience of senses and intellect.

Shabd mystics are fountains of love, for they are one with the Supreme Being. Sat Lok is a vast ocean of pure love. From there emanates the stream of love that sustains the whole universe. Below Parbrahm, the water of this stream becomes mixed with impurities. In Brahm Lok, the impurity is very subtle, causal maya; lower down in Niranjana Desh, it is less subtle, astral maya, but on the physical plane the impurity of maya is so gross that the stream of love is sometimes lost in the marshes and sands of desires and passions. In its inner essence, love is the transcendent Shabd or Dhun (धुन).

Water is found in the pure state of white snow on the tops of mountains, but when it flows down into the plains, it becomes mixed with many impurities, so much so that at places it becomes practically mud and, instead of cleaning, its touch spoils our hands and clothes. Similarly, love is found in the pure state in high spiritual planes, but in this world it is mixed with various impurities such as desire and lust, egoism and vanity, greed and anger, jealousy and hatred. Here all love is a mixture. When the impurities are too many, it becomes mud and its touch pollutes us, but in a less impure form, it retains to some extent its original quality of cleaning and purifying.

Love ennobles us and elevates us to higher levels. The deeper our love, the higher shall be the flight of our soul in the inner subtle planes. Love means self-denial and self-sacrifice. To give up all desire, to give up all rights and claims, to be a slave to another person without any remuneration, this is to love.

DEVOTION

پرسند عشق چیست بجز ترک اختیار هر کوز اختیار زست اختیار نیست

If thou art asked what love is,
Say thou, it's the relinquishing of one's rights.
Who doth not give up his rights,
Helpless doth he remain.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.53

تا نیست نگردی رویه هست نه دهند این مرتبه با همیت پست نه دهند

If nothing thou dost not become,
The path of existence is not opened to thee;
But through weak resolution
This high state thou canst not attain.

SARMAD, *RUBAIYAT-I SARMAD* 135, P.133

Drown thy separate existence in love and then would thou have true life. Be in the being of the Beloved and live in the life of the Lord. Lay down thy life for him and have no desire save what he wills; give up thy egoism and vanity and merge thy being in him.

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

If to play the game of love dost thou desire,
Then with thy head on thy palm
Do thou come into my lane.
O give thou thy head without hesitation,
And then only on this path do thou set thy foot.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1412

We have to lay down our head, but not wait to know whether it is accepted or rejected.

شاد باش اے دل کہ فردا بر سر بازار عشق مژدہ قتل است گرچہ وعدہ دیدار نیست

Be glad, O my heart, for here is the good news:
Tomorrow in the market of love
Shalt thou be slain,
Although there is no promise
That thy beloved will be shown to thee.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

در درہ منزل لیلی کہ خطر اہاست بجاں شرط اول قدم آنت کہ مجنوں باشی

In the path to the abode of Laila (the beloved),
On which there is danger to life,
The condition for taking the first step
Is for thee to become Majnun (the love-crazed lover).

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p.371

پ্রেम न बाड़ी ऊपजै, प्रेम न हाट बिकाय ।
राजा परजा जेहि रूचै, सीस देइ लै जाय ॥

Love groweth not on trees, nor is it sold at shops.
Whosoever desireth – the king or the subject –
May have it by giving his head.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p.43:3

Unless we give our head – kill our egoism and vanity, our
separate self – we cannot find our beloved.

ہچ کس را تا نگر داوفا نیست رہ در بارگاہ کبریا

So long as he loseth not himself,
No man findeth the way to the durbar of the Almighty.

RUMI, *MASNAVI VI*:232

b. *Effect of love*

Some people question: What is the fun of such an intense attachment? Why should we love at all? Instead of giving our all to another person and depending on that person's whim and fancy, is it not better to mind our own interest and look to our own gain? The world would say, "Yes, it is"; but "No", says the lover. In the first place, we have no time to think of such things; we are so much taken up with the thoughts of the beloved that the idea of worldly gain and loss finds no access into our mind. We love, and are so happy and transported that we do not care for other thoughts.

प्रीति प्रेम तनु खचि रहिआ बीचु न राई होत ॥

Love is permeating his whole frame,
And for any other thing no room is left.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

(1) *Love kills egoism*: The desires of the lover are absorbed in the will of the beloved; the very self is merged and drowned in the being of that person. When the self is killed, who is there to think or desire? Such a true and deep love draws even God to us.

आसिक मासुक है गया, इसक कहावै सोइ ।
दादू उस मासूक का, अल्लहि आसिक होइ ॥

The lover hath become the beloved,
And this indeed is true love.
Of that beloved, O Dadu,
God himself becometh the lover.

DADU, *DADU DAYAL KI BANI*, VOL.1, P.40:147

نماید روئے آں حسن جہاں سوز اگر من خود نپاشم در میانہ

If I myself were not in the way,
Then wouldst He manifest
His world-illuminating beauty.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *DIVAN-I BU ALI QALANDAR* 83, P.90

It is our egoism that casts a veil over the face of our beloved Lord and hides him from our view. If through love and devotion to the mystic adept we remove this veil, then within ourselves we shall see the light of God.

چون شوی فانی توا ز ذکر خدا راه یابی و در حریم کبریا

When in remembering God dost thou lose thyself,
Then findest thou the way to his durbar.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.21

چون بمانی با خدا یابی وصال خویش را گم سازاے صاحب کمال

When thou thyself shalt cease to be,
Then the beloved Lord shalt thou find.
Therefore, O thou wise one,
Try to lose thy self.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.21

Love kills our egoism, drowns our desires, loosens our attachments and focuses our whole being at one point. Love and selfishness are incompatible terms; where there is love, there is no selfishness.

ہر کرا جامہ ز عشقے چاک شد اوز حرص و عیب کھن پاک شد

Whosoever through love teareth his garment,
Of all greed and impurity is he rid.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:22

(2) *Transcendent knowledge – fruit of love and devotion:* As a rule we keep thinking of various things; our mind does not stop at one idea, but goes on wandering from this thought to that, and from that to others. The human mind is like the screen of a cinema show, where nothing is fixed or stable; various scenes and pictures come and go. Every moment on the screen of its imagination, the mind is shifting its scenery from place to place. It is like a rough sea that rolls on violently and furiously, visited by storms and tempests. One wave rises and then another. This is the ordinary condition of our mind. We all think and ruminate, but the contents of our thoughts are chequered with multifarious forms.

But different is the case with the lover. His mind is like the calm sea, serene and quiet, unruffled by the wind of other thoughts and passions. It is firmly set on one object, and on the screen of his mental vision there is but one picture – that of the beloved. When we love, our thoughts are centred on one person; our soul is riveted on one point. And when that person is the Guru, then our soul is free to fly up into divine regions and taste eternal bliss.

Love takes us out of the narrow bounds of gross matter and transports us into realms subtle and spiritual, the pure regions of the soul, from where we feel the whole world as our own and realize our union with the Most High. The broader view of the lover at once comprehends and transcends the narrow considerations of this world. Through love, the drop merges into the ocean, and the individual turns into the universal. It is love alone that can burn all our selfish desires and liberate us for spiritual flight.

هر که مُرداندرتین او نفس کُمر
مرد را فرمان برد خورشید و ابر

Whoever curbeth the mind in his body,
The sun and the clouds doth he command.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:3004

The lover ceases to be human; he becomes transcendent and possessed of supernatural powers. Love is the true alchemy that turns ordinary mortals into divine beings.

شاد باش اے عشق خوش سودائے ما اے طیب جملہ علت ہائے ما

اے دوائے نخت و ناموس ما اے تواظاطون و جالینوس ما

Hail, O thou love, that bringest us good gain,
O thou physician for all my ailments,
O thou antidote for my egoism and ill-repute,
O thou, my Plato and my Galen!'

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:23-24

Love is the one cure for all our troubles, the one remedy for all our ailments; it is a sure antidote for all the weakness that the flesh is prone to. And when the filth of the mind is reduced to ashes by the fire of love, the spirit shines forth as pure gold and is then ready for transcendent union with the Supreme Being.

اے خنک جانے کہ خود را باخته سوخته خود را با حق ساخته

How fortunate is he who sacrificeth himself!
Burning his ego doth he unite himself with God.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, p.35

بے فنائے خود منیر نیست دیدار شما می فروشد خویش را اول خریدار شما

Without killing his ego, none can behold thee.
Who desireth to buy thee,
He must sell his own self first.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

'Plato and Galen were prominent Greek philosophers who wrote about the world of the spirit.

DEVOTION

Without love we remain self-centred and vain, and so selfish we are hardly better than beasts. We remain imprisoned in the cell of our own stunted mental outlook. In all our actions, the centre of reference is ourselves. Wrapped up in our own individual interests and blinded by our own delusion, egoism and vanity, separated from others, we cannot see the unity of all being and existence.

Without love, we remain confined within the narrow four walls of the intellect, which is frail, changeable and unreliable. Only when we come out of our cold, calculating intellectualism and soar on the warm and inspiring wings of love can we enter the sphere of transport.

Love is the first step and essential factor in true realization. Transcendent knowledge is the fruit of the tree of love. It is our love and devotion to the mystic adept that opens our inner eyes and shows us absolute reality.

یا الہی چشم بینائے بدہ در سرم از عشق سودائے بدہ

Give me, O Lord, the eye that seeth,
And with the madness of love
Do thou fill my head.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.46

علت عاشق ز علت ہاجداست عشق اضطرلاب اسرار خداست

Different from all other diseases
Is the disease of the lover,
For love is the key to the secrets of God.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* 1:110

The intoxication of the wine of love drives out all dirt from our mind and transports our soul to regions spiritual and divine.

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RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:110

The intoxication of the wine of love drives out all dirt from our mind and transports our soul to regions spiritual and divine.

چہ بادست ایں نے دانم کہ جام دل بیک جرعد چٹاں از رنگ صافی شد کہ دیدم یار را دروے

What this wine is I know not,
Save that the cup of the heart was by a single drop
Cleansed of its rust (of impurities),
Such that the face of the Beloved did I behold therein.

MUINUDDIN CHISHTI, *DIWAN-I GHARIB NAWAZ*

نہ عصیاں ماندنے طاعت شدم بخواند آں ساعت چٹاں گشتم در آں حالت کہ وے من گشت من ہم وے

Neither remained sin nor piety;
In that moment was I lost,
In that state so much was I transformed,
That he became I and I he.

MUINUDDIN CHISHTI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

(3) *Mistaken approach – absolute knowledge before love:* The mistake of some practitioners today is that without first undergoing the training of love and devotion they want to have absolute knowledge. This is putting the cart before the horse. If they remain on the intellectual level and their theoretical knowledge stands apart from their practical life, then, since they do not really *know* what they profess to believe, their actions may give lie to their words. They may think they can do evil with impunity, claiming that evil has no reality and that spirit is beyond all pollution.

Those who do not practise devotion remain prisoners of the realm of time and bound by the chain of karma. They have not gone beyond good and evil, beyond pleasure and pain and other dualities. If a prisoner while in prison behaves and acts like a free citizen, the prisoner is gravely deluded and will come to grief.

Without love there can be no access inside into subtle planes, and without internal flight and mystic transport into those planes, there can be no transcendent knowledge. If we want true knowledge,

we should first give our love to the mystic adept and learn from him the right path of devotion and inner realization.

Without first ascending the ladder of love and devotion, we cannot jump up to absolute knowledge. We blunder when we confuse our intellectual understanding of a theory with the mystic realization of a transcendent truth. True knowledge is not intellectual understanding, but mystic realization, and for this love and devotion to the Guru are essential.

By washing it with the water of love, we must remove the dirt of our mind before we think of beholding in it the reflection of the divine face; we must lift the veil of vanity from the eye of our soul before we can have a transcendent vision of spiritual realities.

دردِ عاشق بجز معشوق نیست درمیاں شاں فارق و مفروق نیست

In the heart of the lover is nothing save the Beloved;
There is nothing to separate and divide them.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:2680

But true love is not cheap; greedy people cannot obtain it.

سرمد غمِ عشق بوالہوس راند ہند سوزِ دلی پروانہ مگس راند ہند

The sensual, O Sarmad, are not given
The pain of love;
The fly knoweth not the burning pang
Of the moth's heart.

SARMAD, *RUBAIYAT-I SARMAD* 94, P.91

The burning fire of love falls to the lot of a few only. It consumes all their dirt and filth, leaving them transparently pure. Their transparent hearts reflect the light of divine glory, and their

pure souls behold spiritual sights and hear the heavenly harmony. True transcendent knowledge comes to lovers only; the world at large remains ignorant of it.

2 Devotion to the mystic adept

Now the question arises: Whom should we love? To whom should we give our devotion? Why should we love the mystic adept and not another person?

First of all, it is plain that unless we consider another person superior to us, we cannot learn from him. We must have regard for him, and the more we respect and look up to him, the quicker and better we learn. This is a general principle. Now the highest form of regard is devotion; therefore, if we are devoted to the mystic adept, we shall easily and quickly learn the method of mystic transport from him.

Moreover, when we love someone, we tend to become like that person. In the long run we are transformed to become more like the person whom we most strongly love. Therefore, if we love the mystic adept deeply and give him our devotion, we are bound to become mystics ourselves and be united with God.

However, let us examine the question without bias and from the third person's point of view, and see who really deserves our love in this world. Who is the highest being and therefore most worthy of our devotion and adoration? To this most people would say God and God alone is worthy of our love. We have no disagreement with such people. God is the most perfect being, and thus he alone should be adored and worshipped.

But the question is: Can we as human beings come in contact with the Almighty in his transcendent essence? No, we cannot, and for this reason, he cannot be loved by us directly in our present condition. So long as we are human and on the physical

plane, and before we have realized the Supreme Being, God or any other transcendent entity cannot be the object of our love, for we can have no contact with such a being.

We can love only those beings who are on the same plane of existence as we are. We are in a physical body and in the material world; consequently our beloved here must also be in a physical body. As human beings we must choose some earthly being for our love, someone on the physical plane and in flesh and blood. Now let us view the whole of this material creation and see who is the best and the highest being here and therefore worthy of our love.

The physical world may be divided into five classes – plants, insects, birds, quadrupeds and humans. Out of all these, human beings obviously have the highest potential as creatures. We are at the top of all the material creation. We alone have sense and intelligence. Other animals might also have some sort of sense, but there is no doubt that we have the best kind of sense and the most highly developed intelligence. We are called *ashraf al-makhlooqaat* (أشرف المخلوقات), the 'summit' of all creation.

When once we realize that we are superior to all other kinds of creation in this world, then it becomes plain that worship of other things and animals is degradation. If we worship idols, it is futile, for they are all made of matter; they have no life. How can an idol or image of our own making give us salvation or transcendent knowledge? It cannot. This is a simple principle, but in their practical application almost all religions ignore this fundamental truth. If matter is not to be worshipped, where is the need of any special kind of temple, mosque or church? God is not physical that he may be found in material things.

Some people worship plants like the pipal tree, or reptiles like the serpent, or birds of different kinds, but all this leads to decline. If we worship things inferior to us, we are bound to go down. We should not love or worship any other thing in this world; we

ourselves are the highest of all creation. If anything is worthy of human love, it is a human being.

But why should one person worship another? All are apparently at par. If we should not give our devotion to any being inferior to us, why should we respect and worship an equal? This question has led many a person to believe that devotion is unnecessary, and that we should depend on ourselves.

However, if we do not merely have the surface view of things but probe deep into their reality, we shall have to admit that all people are not equal. Even from the intellectual point of view, there is a difference. Mystics, human in appearance, in reality are God-realized. Their inner eye is open; they are beyond ignorance and delusion. Although in human garb, they are superhuman; they are in a transcendent union with God.

We do not recognize them, for we are blind; we see only phenomena. We are deceived by appearances, for our inner eye, which alone can see reality, is sealed. We should go to mystics, who are the highest beings in this world, and give them our love and devotion, so that our spiritual eyes may be opened and we may see them in their true being and know them in their real essence.

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥
भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥

Nor can I be seen, as thou hast seen me, by the Vedas,
Nor by austerities, nor by alms, nor by offerings;
But by devotion to me alone
May I thus be perceived, O Arjuna,
And be known and beheld in essence,
And entered.

DEVOTION

ہمت پروانہ میں اے بے خبر سوز چوں پروانہ تائیابی خبر

Look thou to the daring of the moth,
O thou ignorant one;
Burn thyself like the moth
If insight dost thou desire.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.36

Unless we burn ourselves in the flame of love, unless we devote ourselves heart and soul to the mystic adept, we can never know his inner being, his true essence as a God-realized being.

पुंस्तवे स्त्रीत्वे विशेषो व जाती नामा श्रमोदभवः ।
न कारणं मदभजने भक्तिव हि कारणम् ।
यज्ञदान तपोभिर्वा वेदाध्ययन कर्मभिः ।
नैव द्रष्टुमहं शक्तो मदभक्तिविमुखैः सदा ॥

Husband, wife, caste and profession
Are not causes of nearness to me;
Devotion alone is the cause.
And who lacketh devotion,
He doth not by sacrifices (*yagya*), charity, austerity,
Study of Vedas and such other practices behold me.

ADHYATAM RAMAYANA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Without devotion all other action is futile on the path of spiritual realization.

गुरु सेवा बिना कर्मयः कुर्यान्मूढचेतना ।
स याति निष्फलत्वहि स्वप्न लब्धं यथा थनम् ॥

Without service to Guru
Doth the foolish fellow perform actions,

(But) like wealth got in a dream
Futile are all these.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Unless by devotion we first rid ourselves of egoism, desire and worldly attachment, transport into subtle spiritual planes is impossible. And devotion is perfected only through the mystic adept, since he alone can unite us with Shabd and God.

ਬਿਨ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਨਾਮਿ ਨ ਲਗੈ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

Without Satguru one cannot have devotion,
Nor attachment to Nam.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.1417

ਹੋਰੁ ਕਿਤੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਉਪਦੇਸ ॥

Save through instruction of the mystic adept,
Nowhere else is devotion.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.22

زاهد اراده برندی نبر و محذورست عشق کار بست که موقوف هدايت باشد

If the religious one findeth not the way,
Excusable is he;
For love is such a training
As dependeth on instruction.

HAFIZ, DIVAN-I HAFIZ, P.360, 190:4

We should try to acquire this devotion at all costs; it is such a valuable treasure as is worth buying for any price.

گردگیراں بجای غم جاناں خریدہ اند اے دل تو ایس معاملہ باری نمی کنی

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If with their lives have others bought this pain of love,
Why dost not thou, O my heart, make this bargain?

HAFIZ, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

It is indeed a cheap bargain if we become devoted to a Guru even by offering our head or giving up our egoism, for that is the only way to God.

सीस दिये जो गुरु मिलें, तौ भी सस्ता जान ॥

If by giving thy head thou canst have Guru,
Even then know, it is cheap.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, p.6:62

The Guru in essence is one with God; therefore in his inner being he is omnipresent. But only through love and devotion do we open that eye which can see him everywhere.

ز چشم عشق تو ایں دید روئے شاید ما کہ نور چہرہ خواباں ز قاف تا قاف است

With the eye of love do thou
Behold the face of the Beloved,
For from pole to pole
Spreadeth the lustre of his eyes.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p.50

Only through love is God most immediate to us. And our love for God means our love for the human manifestation of God, the mystic adept, because God in his transcendent essence is beyond the sphere of our life on the physical plane. Thus love and devotion to a Guru is the gateway to the durbar of the Almighty.

Beauty, they say, inspires love, but beauty is of many sorts. There is physical beauty, there is intellectual beauty and there is spiritual beauty. All beauty indeed inspires love, but the highest

kind of beauty inspires the highest form of love. Physical beauty has its charm, no doubt, but it is ephemeral and superficial; true beauty lies deep in the soul. One alone is truly beautiful who has a beautiful soul. And indeed most beautiful is that soul which has attained the highest spiritual realms and become one with the pure transcendent beauty of the Supreme Absolute.

The mystics' beauty is spiritual; it is deep and permanent; it is the beauty of reality. Physical beauty is a snare that dazzles our physical eyes; true beauty lies deep in the heart and soul; it captivates our real being.

When we love a mystic, we imbibe his qualities. All the spiritual beauty of the beloved comes into the being of the lover, who shines forth with a divine lustre. Our love for a mystic must turn us also into mystics.

ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮੁੰਦੁ ਨਦੀ ਸਭਿ ਸਿਖੀ ॥

Guru is the ocean, and all his disciples the stream.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.150

The stream flows down into the ocean and becomes one with it; through devotion the disciples identify themselves with the Guru and reach his ultimate reality.

زاهد! اگر توصلی تمناست مددخواه از همیت پیران دو عالم بهامان باش

If seekest thou union with God, O thou religious one,
Then come thou under the shelter of the mystic adept,
Lord of both the worlds,
And beg for his help.
Then indeed shalt thou live in peace.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.252

क्या हिन्दू क्या मुसलमान, क्या ईसाई जैन ।
गुरु भक्ती पूरन बिना, कोई न पावे चैन ॥

Whether a Hindu or Muslim, a Christian or a Jain,
Without perfect devotion to the Guru
None can have peace of mind.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:61*

Guru bhakti – devotion to the Guru by doing the spiritual practice mystics teach – is essential for all who seek the light of truth; this is the first step in all spiritual enlightenment and mystic realization.

गुरु भक्ति दृढ़ के करो, पीछे और उपाय ।
बिन गुरु भक्ती मोह जग, कभी न काटा जाय ॥

First be thou firm in devotion to the Guru;
Other methods come later;
(For) without devotion to the Guru,
Never can thy worldly attachment be cut off.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:65*

The Upanishads also say that only that person who practises Guru bhakti finds inner light and spiritual union with God.

यस्य देवे पराभक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ॥

These truths shine forth only in that great one
Who is deeply devoted to God,
And equally to Guru.

SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD VI:23

Without devotion to the mystic adept, salvation cannot be obtained; it is only true mystics who can lend us help in the inner realization of truth and reality.

ہر ولی رانوح و کشتی باں شناس صحبت ایں خلق را طوفاں شناس

Look thou upon every mystic as Noah and sailor,
And the company of worldly people
Take thou to be the flood.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:2225

Only mystics can save us from the whirlpools of this deadly sea of the world; only through devotion to them can we cross this unfathomable ocean of phenomena.

مرد از خاطر رنداں طلب اے دل ورنہ کار صعب است مبادا کہ خطائے یکنیم!

Seek thou the help of gracious mystics, O my heart;
Otherwise, the task is so difficult
Thou art liable to blunder and fall.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Since mystics are in essence identical with God, through devotion to them we also attain this transcendent union and go beyond the sphere of error. We should drown our individual ego in the spiritual ocean of their being.

ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਗੁਰ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਵੈ ॥

Leave thou thy self
And enter thou the being of thy Guru.

GURU AMAR DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.509

مراد دل بغیر از دوست چیزے در نمی گنجد خلوت خانہ سلطان کے دیگر نمی گنجد

In my heart save my Friend nothing else doth abide;
In the private chamber of the sultan,
No one else findeth room.

GARIB NAWAZ, *DIVAN-I GARIB NAWAZ*, p.64

In the Sufi tradition, this is known as *fana-fi shaikh* (فانی فی الشیخ), merging oneself in the Master (*shaikh*). The next stage is *fana-fi Allah* (فانی فی اللہ), merging oneself in God. The first step of *fana-fi shaikh* is essential for the attainment of the second.

गुरु भक्ती बिन शब्द में पचते, सो भी मानुष मूरख जान ।
शब्द खुलेगा गुरु मेहर से, खैंचें सुरत गुरु बलवान ॥

Without devotion to Guru
Who seeketh to grasp Shabd,
A very fool is he;
(For) through Guru's grace
Shall Shabd be revealed (in him),
And by his powerful being
Shall his soul be drawn up.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:17:28*

Unless we first lose our ego in love and devotion for the human form of the Guru, we cannot realize his inner essence as Shabd or God.

मोटे बंधन जगत के, गुरु भक्ती से काट ।
झीने बंधन चित के, कटें नाम परताप ॥
मोटे जब लग जायँ नहिं, झीने कैसे जायँ ।
ताते सब को चाहिये नित गुरु भक्ति कमायँ ॥

The thick ties of the world
 Cut thou off by devotion to thy Guru.
 The fine ties of the mind
 Are sundered by the power of Nam.
 So long as the thick ones are not gone,
 How can the fine go?
 Hence it is a must for all to be ever devoted to the Guru.

SOAMI JI, *SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:66-67*

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever
 will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

BIBLE, *MATTHEW 16:25*

जौ परलोक इहाँ सुख चहहूँ। सुनि मम बचन हृदयें दृढ़ गहहूँ।
 सुलभ सुखद मारग यह भाई। भगति मोरि पुरान श्रुति गाई॥

If here and hereafter happiness dost thou desire,
 Then listen thou to my words
 And hold them fast in thy heart;
 Easy and peace-giving is this path, O brother;
 This path of devotion to me
 Is sung by Puranas and Vedic scriptures.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS 7:44*

All scriptures and mystics lay stress on the need of devotion
 to the Guru. Without devotion, all our religious actions and prac-
 tices lose their point and significance and become lifeless things.

ग्यान अगम प्रत्यूह अनेका। साधन कठिन न मन कहूँ टेका॥
 करत कष्ट बहु पावइ कोऊ। भक्ति हीन मोहि प्रिय नहिँ सोऊ॥

Various are the forms and ways of gyan (knowledge),
 But difficult are these practices

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And incapable of pacifying the mind.
 If in their performance much dost thou suffer,
 Even then, devoid of devotion
 Thou art not dear to me.

TULSIDAS, *RAMCHARITMANAS* 7:44

a. Four kinds of devotion and service

There are four ways in which we can serve our Guru and be devoted to him.

(1) *Service with wealth* (धन की सेवा): First is offering our wealth and property to be used in his service and according to his will. This weakens the ties of attachment to things of this world which bind our mind and keep it from attending to the mystic practice. This is the lowest kind of service.

(2) *Service with body* (तन की सेवा): Next is doing voluntary service with the physical body, such as manual labour and all kinds of physical service. This work may be for the company of devotees or for the Guru or others, and includes such things as cleaning, giving food and water, and obeying all the Guru's orders like a willing and humble servant. This purifies our mind and drives out egoism and vanity. But we should not do service with the idea of reward. Service should be for the sake of service, and out of pure love and deep devotion.

(3) *Service with mind* (मन की सेवा): Third is placing our mind at his feet and leaving ourselves entirely in his hands. At this stage no doubts or questions arise in our mind, and we follow the behests of our Guru without thinking or arguing. This leads to inner realization.

उठु मठु यठु सडु सडुधि गुरु कडु रुकमि मँनिअै पाएीअै ॥

Offer thy body, mind and wealth to the Guru,
And follow thou his instructions;
Then shalt thou find God.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.918

Some people try to do service according to their own idea but against the will of the Guru. This is obstinacy and such service has little value. In true service, there should be no obstinacy; in love there is no compulsion; it is all submission and yielding to the will of the beloved Lord. He knows best; his will is supreme and must be carried out. Whatever the Guru says is sweet, and whatever he does is right. Even in his apparent harshness is his deep love hidden; even in his outward anger is his divine kindness concealed.

ਜੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਝਿੜਕੇ ਤ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥

If the Guru giveth me a snub, sweet is it to me.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.758

Sweet, indeed, for under the veil of harshness he does us a great good. Once Goldsmith, the well-known English writer, was going somewhere with some friends when he came across a beggar. Now those friends were dead against giving any charity to him, for most beggars are impostors, but Goldsmith's heart was melting with pity and he could not resist. However, he did not want to give his friends an occasion for adverse criticism. So he was in a fix and did not know what to do. Incidentally his eyes fell on a few sticks worth about a pence that the beggar was carrying and a clever idea came into his mind. He began abusing him for begging, and quickly seizing his sticks with a show of rage, he threw a shilling or so to him and said, "Go away, don't bother people with your appeals." Then turning to his friends he

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said, "You see how cheap I have got these sticks." Hardly had he finished his sentence, when another beggar appeared. Now it was hard for him to hide his feelings. He threw that bundle of sticks to him, and with a show of anger said, "Run away, and don't worry people by your begging."

Such is the way in which mystics help us; they don't make a parade of it. On the other hand, they cover their kindness with harsh words. But if a pitcher contains only milk, what else can come out of it no matter what means we may use to bring it out? Guru is all love and mercy; if he makes a show of harshness or anger, what else can come out of him but infinite love and kindness? All his actions are prompted by his deep love; all his doings are an expression of his profound kindness.

(4) *Service with soul* (ਸੁਰਤ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ): The last and highest kind of service and devotion is with the soul when, through mystic practice, it comes in contact with Shabd on inner subtle planes of transcendence. This takes us to the highest stage of absolute reality and identifies us with the Guru and God. But this is most difficult of all, and not possible without his grace and mercy.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਭਗਤਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਕਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੇ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਮਹੇਸ਼ਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੀ ॥

What service to Guru can a poor one render?
(Even) the gods Brahma, Indra and Mahesh (Shiva)
Know it not.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.1032

ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਕਾਈ ਤੁਮ ਕਰਹੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਿਰਮਾਇਣਾ ॥

Service with soul I know not at all;
Be thou kind, O merciful Lord.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1078

b. Guru's bhakti destroys all karma

The seed of all karma (actions) is in Trikuti or Brahm Lok (the second region for Shabd mystics), but the seed of love or bhakti for the perfect adept is in Sach Khand (the fifth region). Therefore the effect of such a bhakti overruns and cancels the effect of karma.

As the essence of Guru bhakti emanates from the stage of absolute reality, whereas karma originates from relative reality (or reality of the second order), therefore this devotion has the power of destroying karma, making us karmaless or *neh karmi* (निहकर्मੀ) – actionless, which takes us into the bosom of the ultimate reality. As already said, in its true essence, love is Shabd; it supersedes and transcends all karma.

Those who are devoted to a Guru are pure and clean, for this love and devotion of theirs purifies their hearts. Although outwardly they may be in the thick of the world, apparently leading a life of luxury, yet in their inner being they are full of devotion to their Guru. Therefore, whatever they do is approved by God, and whatever they offer, accepted.

ਤਿਨ ਕਾ ਖਾਧਾ ਪੈਧਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਸਭੁ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਨਾਮਿ ਹਰੀ ਰਾਤੇ ॥
 ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਘਰ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਹਲ ਸਰਾਈ ਸਭਿ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਹਹਿ
 ਜਿਨੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸੇਵਕ ਸਿਖ ਅਭਿਆਗਤ ਜਾਇ ਵਰਸਾਤੇ ॥
 ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਤੁਰੈ ਜੀਨ ਖੁਰਗੀਰ ਸਭਿ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਹਹਿ
 ਜਿਨੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਿਖ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਤ ਚੜਿ ਜਾਤੇ ॥

Who is devoted to God's Name,
 Pure is his eating, wearing (clothes), wealth and all;
 Pure are all his houses, buildings, palaces, inns,
 In which have stayed devoted followers,
 Disciples and guests;
 Pure are all his horses, saddles, tapestry

On whom have ridden devoted disciples,
Sadhs, and saints.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.648

c. Worldly love and mystic devotion compared

All love in this world is love in delusion and darkness. We love one person and hate another, because we see multiplicity and variety, which is characteristic of phenomena. Mystic love is love in transcendent knowledge; saints love all, because they see the same absolute reality in everyone.

If we love people and things of this world, our attachment to them brings us back here again and again. After death we go to that place we are attached to; this is a universal principle. Hence, if we love the perfect mystic adept, we shall certainly go to him. And as he goes to the highest stage of the ultimate absolute, so if our love is true and sincere, we cannot but follow him there.

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

Whosoever at the end abandoneth the body,
Thinking upon any being,
Ever having been absorbed in its thought,
To that being only he goeth.

BHAGAVAD GITA VIII:6

Thus, if we want to go into purely spiritual realms, we should give our love and devotion to a perfect adept. During our lifetime also we can go there if we do the mystic practice earnestly, zealously and devotedly. Failing that, if our love for the Guru is sincere and deep, we shall surely make our way there after our death.

But one may question whether we should love in delusion at all. If we reject worldly love because it is delusion, how can we advocate loving a mystic, for at the physical level that too is in delusion and darkness. However, as shown in the last chapter, the mystic adept is a door of light in this utter darkness of phenomena. Thus the difference between worldly love and love towards mystics is that the former keeps us within delusion and phenomena, whereas the latter takes us out of all darkness and delusion into the transcendent light of absolute reality.

The true essence of love is Shabd; it is the inner reality of devotion. External love is attachment in ignorance, but Shabd is love in consciousness. This world is a place of delusion and phenomena, and the love of this place is also in delusion, but by the practice of Shabd Yoga, when our inner eyes are opened, it is transformed into transcendent love through mystic knowledge.

The highest love is Sar Shabd, (सार शब्द) the Essence Word or quintessence of God, and that can be known by the naked soul only in the predominately spiritual region of Parbrahm and beyond. It is a spiritual attraction that draws the soul up into the stage of the ultimate absolute. God and soul are one in essence. The mutual spiritual magnetic attraction between them is real love; that is true Shabd.

God, soul and Shabd are not three distinct entities; in their real being they are one, and that one final supreme entity is love. This is the true trinity. God is the ocean of love, infinite and eternal. Shabd is like a vast river flowing out of that ocean and sustaining the whole creation. Our soul is a drop of the same ocean and, when carried into it by the river of Shabd, it becomes that ocean itself. Thus mystic love is the ultimate absolute reality of all things and beings.

فاش می گویم و از گفته خود دل شادم بنده عشقم و از هر دو جهان آزادم

Openly do I say, and happy am I to say so:
Slave am I of love, and free am I of both the worlds.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.703, 416:1

The true lover not only disregards this present world, but also sets aside the next. To his beloved Lord he sacrifices his all, his world, his religion, himself, his everything.

حافظ گر عشق و مستی دگر رہ باز گوی عاشق یارم مرا با کفر و با ایمان چہ کار

If a lover and an intoxicated one art thou, O Hafiz,
Then say thou once again:
Lover am I of my Friend;
What concern have I with religious belief and heresy?

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.232

باغ بہشت و سایہ طوبیٰ و قصر حور با خاک کوئے یار برابر نے کنم

The Garden of Eden,
The shade of the *tuba* tree (in heaven)
And the palace of *houris* (enchancing celestial maidens),
For me equal not the dust in my Friend's lane.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.719, 430:2

حافظ جناب پیر مامن وفاست من ترک خاک بوسے آن در نے کنم

A place of treasures is the *durbar*
Of the mystic adept, O Hafiz;
Never will I give up kissing the dust of that door.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.719, 430:9

ਸੋ ਸੀਸੁ ਭਲਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰ ਪਾਵਨੁ ਹੈ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਿੰਦੁੜੀਏ
ਜੋ ਜਾਇ ਲਗੇ ਗੁਰ ਪੈਰੇ ਰਾਮ ॥

That head is good, holy, and sacred, O my life,
Which falleth at the feet of the Guru.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.540

A Guru is worthy of all our love and devotion; for through him alone can we find salvation and union with God. Worldly attachment is a chain that binds us to maya, phenomena; we should break that chain by giving all our devotion to the mystic adept. That is the way to the Lord.

گر ہے خواہید پیوستن باوائے واعظان باید از دنیا و دین کردی شمار انقطاع

If ye seek union with Him, O preachers,
Then cut off (attachment)
To religion and the world.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR* 56, P.62

We are not true lovers if we have not identified ourselves with the being of our beloved Lord, if we do not see him everywhere and in all things, nay if we see anything else but him.

دانی کہ چیست دنیا دل از خدا بریدن جز عشق او گزیدن جز ذکر او شنیدن

Knowest thou what the world is?
'Tis cutting thy heart off from God,
Indulging in everything but his love,
And listening to everything but his story.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR* 77, P.84

We cannot attain this high stage of transcendent love unless we are prepared to give up our egoism, unless we can offer our head to our Beloved.

کمینه شرط وفا ترک سر بود حافظ برو اگر ز تو ایس کار بر نمی آید

The least that fidelity demandeth of thee,

O Hafiz,

Is laying down thy head.

Go away, if even this much thou canst not do.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.207

از میان خویشتن تو بیرون کن تا در آری تو یار را بکنار

O get thyself out of the way,

So that under thine arm thy beloved Lord

Mayest thou have.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

نفی گرداں از دل خود ماسوا تا بکنجد در دولت غیر از خدا

All else do thou turn out from thy heart,

So that in thy heart nothing save God may find room.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.21

تا توئی کے یار گرد دیا رہ تو چوں بناشی یار باشد یار تو

So long as thou art, how can God be thy friend?

If thou be not, then he wouldst be thy friend.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.21

It is our own self that is the separating wall between God and us.

ایں حجاب از تست اے محبوب من بے حجابست ورنہ آں محبوب من

This veil is from thee, O my dear friend;
Ever unveiled is that Beloved of mine.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, p.278

When we love a person, some sort of spiritual magnetic rays proceed from our heart and go to the heart of that person, from where they are reflected back to us to ennoble and purify our heart. How long it will take to do so, and the extent to which our heart will be purified depends on the intensity of our own love and the degree of purity and spirituality of the beloved's heart.

If the heart of the beloved is pure and his spirituality great, then the purifying influence of love is quick and enormous. Hence, if we love the mystic adept who has the purest heart and highest spirituality, then in a short time our heart is purified, and we are enabled to behold the radiance of the beloved Lord within us.

حافظ چو تو پا در حرم عشق نهادی بردامن او دست زن و از همه بکسل

Since thou hast set thy feet
In the sanctuary of love, O Hafiz,
Hold thou fast to his skirt,
And let go of all else.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, p.623, 361:6

Not to speak of love and devotion, even mere company has its effect. It is the company we keep that makes or mars our character. A man is truly known by the company he keeps. Society is the strongest factor in moulding our life and habits. And when the company of ordinary worldly people who have no outstanding traits colours all our being, how much more strongly must we be influenced by the company of mystics whose personality is the greatest and grandest, whose being is spiritual and transcendent.

ہم نشینی ساعے باولیا بہتر از صد سالہ طاعت ہے ریا

A moment in the company of mystics
Is better than a hundred years of sincere prayer.

RUMI, *MASNAVI MAULANA RUM I*, P.101

3 Faith and worship

From what has been said above, it is plain that we should develop pure love within. To this end, we should give our sincere and earnest devotion to the mystic adept of the time, who alone can give us the highest training in this line. Devotion is an attitude of the heart which implies trust and faith; worship is its external expression.

یک نگاہے گر کند بر من زنگار جاں چہ باشد گر بود صد جاں نثار

Had I not only this life but even hundreds of lives,
If but one look would that Beloved of mine cast on me,
All would I sacrifice to him.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.23

These great Children of Light, who manifest the Light, who themselves are the Light – they, being worshipped, become one, as it were, with us and we become one with them.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA,

SPEECH GIVEN IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, 1900

Worship in religious temples, mosques and churches is futile, for there is nothing but physical matter. God is manifest in mystics, and they alone are worthy of our love and worship.

مجدے کاں اندرون اولیا است سجدہ گاہ نملہ است آنجا خداست

Inside mystics is a (true) mosque,
Which is the place of worship for all,
For God abideth in it.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* II:3111

گفت پیغمبر که حق فرموده است من تنجم بیچ در بالا و پست
در و دل مومن بنجم اے عجب گرم راخواهی در اں دلها طلب

Said the Prophet, God telleth me:
"I live not high nor low....
Wondrous it is! In the heart
Of the believer (mystic) do I live,
And if me dost thou desire,
In his heart do thou seek."

RUMI, *MASNAVI* I:2653, 2655

a. *Worship God through the Guru*

God is with the mystics. If we want him, we should seek him there, and if we want to worship him, we should worship him through them. There is no other higher form of God in this world than the person of the mystic adept; consequently God cannot be worshipped here in any other way except by worshipping him through the mystics and their divinely inspired teachings.

حافظ اینجا به ادب باش که سلطان و ملک همه در بندگی حضرت درویشان است

Be thou respectful here, O Hafiz,
For before mystics
Even kings and angels do bow down.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.99, 36:14

گر در سرت هوائے وصالست حافظا باید که خاک در که اہل بھر شوی

If in thy heart thou hast a desire
Of union (with God), O Hafiz,
Then 'tis a must for thee to be the dust
Of the doorstep of the Seeing Ones.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.837, 510:10

We should be humble before the mystic adept, for he is great; and we should have faith in him, for he is true and in essence one with the Almighty. What we believe in is our faith, and whatever our faith is, to all intents and purposes even that is what we are. A person is what his faith is; his character and personality are to be judged accordingly.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

The faith of each is shaped
To his own nature, O Bharata.
Man consisteth of his faith;
That which his faith is, he is even that.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVII:3

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥

Whatsoever is wrought without faith –
Oblation, gift, austerity or any other deed –
A-satt (untruth) is it called, O Partha;
It is nought, here and hereafter.

BHAGAVAD GITA XVII:28

b. Faith and devotion to the Guru

Have faith in the mystic adept. Faith can move mountains.

Faith in a true mystic leads to inner realization of absolute truth, for the mystic is one with that truth and knowledge.

ہے سجادہ رتلیں کن گرت پیر مغان گوید کہ سالک بے خبر نمود ز راہ و رسم منزلہا

Dye thy prayer mat in wine
If thy Guru telleth thee so,
For he is not unaware of the ins and outs of the path.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.2, 1:3

The true mystic never forgets his beloved Lord, and so is constantly in prayer.

چچ وقت آمد نماز اے ریمون عاشقان رانی صلوٰۃ دایمون

Five are thy times of prayer,
O thou religious one,
But ever in prayer is the (true) lover.

RUMI, *MASNAVI VI*:2669

ਗੁਰੂ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰੁ ਪੂਜੀਐ ਮਨਿ ਤਨਿ ਲਾਇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਦਾਤਾ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ ਸਭਸੈ ਦੇਇ ਅਧਾਰੁ ॥

Guru, who is God, do thou worship
With thy heart and soul,
For he giveth life and sustaineth all.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.52

It is said that we should not worship a person; devotion is due only to the Most High. This is quite true, but for us at present

* Five prayers: Muslims perform *namaaz*, a brief prayer, five times a day, facing towards Mecca.

(before we have had mystic transport into astral and higher, subtler planes and have known reality), God is merely a subjective belief of ours without any objective existence. For our love and worship, however, we need some objective being. Our Guru is before us in objective existence; him we can love. As inwardly he is one with God, loving him leads to loving God. On the physical plane, we can love God only through him, and therefore if we want to worship the Almighty, we should worship him through the Guru.

Only one being – one entity or personality – is to be worshipped though, and that personality or being is God, the most perfect being. But the highest manifestation of God on all planes but the last is the Guru, and at the last absolute stage both are identical. Thus we may say that when God appears in his various possible manifestations on various planes, his name is Guru.

God certainly is to be worshipped on all planes, but as humans we have the physical manifestation of God, the mystic adept, through whom we may worship. During our transport in the astral plane, we should worship through the astral form of God, which we behold as the inner Radiant Form of the Guru. On transcendent planes of rare spirituality, the object of our worship is the transcendent essence of God, Shabd – which again is the real being of the Guru.

At the ultimate stage of the Absolute, the mystic adept and God are one. Thus what we worship throughout is God. Since the Guru is not distinct or separate from God, we can say that we love the Guru and through him we worship and love God.

Guru Arjun's Guru was Ram Das, a name that literally means 'the slave of God'. Out of deep devotion, Guru Arjun exclaimed:

ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਰਿਓ ਰਾਮਦਾਸੁ ॥

O God, thy name is Ram Das!

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.612

In this world there is no other way to God but through the Guru. But alas we know not this fundamental truth, for our egoism stands in our way.

نقاب ہستی خود را تو از میاں نہ دار و گر نہیں آں جمائے کہ می شود پیدا

O lift thou the veil
From thy veiled existence
And then behold what splendour
Bursteth forth.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:4197

آب کم جو تشنگی آور بدست تا بجوشد آب از بالا و پست

Oh, seek not water;
rather produce thou thirst in thyself,
So that from high and low water may gush out to thee.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

If we are keen in our desire for God, if we are athirst for his sight, if we hunger for union with him, then he shall certainly send us one of his mystics to take us to him.

حافظ وظیفہ تو دعا گفتن ست و بس در بند آں مباش کہ نشیند یا شنید

Thy duty is to pray to him, O Hafiz, and that's all;
Be not bound (by the idea)
Whether he hath heard or not.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.397, 215:13

If we love and worship God through the Guru, then we may be sure of his response. If we are devoted to our Guru and follow his teachings, we will worship God and see God in him, and when

we love God, he is even keener than we are for us to come to him. It is we who are wanting in love; otherwise he is ever within us. We need not therefore be anxious for his response; we should rather try to be sincerely and earnestly devoted to him. He is the omniscient Lord; he knows everything. The defect is in us. If through devotion to the mystic adept we shake off our spiritual lethargy, then within ourselves we shall behold him in his eternal perfection.

We differentiate between God and mystics, for we are blind and ignorant. Sometimes we think that as humans are limited, finite beings, they cannot become the infinite, unlimited Lord. We forget that the human body is finite and limited but not the soul, and that it is the soul that becomes one with God. We limit ourselves to external appearances. Guru is not the name of the human frame. That is merely clothing, a dress or cover. The real essence that we call Guru is the spirit in him, which is identical with the absolute Lord. Thus Guru is at once human and God, and worship through him is truly the worship of the Supreme Being.

4 How “Guru is greater than God”

For the true devotee, there is nothing higher or greater than the object of his devotion. This is the secret of love. If in the eyes of the lover the beloved is not the most perfect being, then it is not perfect love. In fact we can truly love only the best and highest being. For true devotees, then, Guru is the greatest entity in the physical realm. He is better and higher than anyone we know in the physical world, for if this is not our view, then our love and devotion are imperfect. If we can imagine anybody better than our beloved, then we are not true lovers. If the beloved is not the whole world of the lover, his all in all, his everything – God, religion, and all – then the lover still is lacking. He has not attained the high stage of transcendent love. Moreover, for a human being, Guru is really greater than anything he has so far realized.

In fact, as already stated, true Masters are one with the absolute God, and there can be no question of comparison. When two things are the same, which of them can we call superior or inferior? Neither. Thus, in reality, in essence, the highest mystics and God are the same thing; they are not different beings. But this is a truth of absolute, transcendent knowledge. So in the physical world of relative truth, Guru for us is indeed the greatest of all beings.

Guru is that form of God whom we can see and come in contact with at all planes, whereas God in his fullness is experienced only on the ultimate plane of absolute, transcendent consciousness. Now, we can understand that for true lovers, the form of God who during progress from humanness to Godhood always remains with them is greater than the rare essence, which is experienced only at the last stage.

For the perfect disciple, Guru is experienced as man-God, plus astral-form God, plus causal-form God, plus transcendent-being God, plus rare spiritual Shabd-God, plus the absolute God. Now, who will the devotee see as greater? Obviously Guru, for in addition to being the Absolute in the highest transcendent stage, he is also with his disciples at each plane of existence, and on each plane he is by far the best and highest being. For human devotion, for devotion on all stages but the last, the absolute God is inaccessible. On these lower planes, he is accessible only in the form of Guru.

Guru is God come close to us; Guru is God come to us in our own garb; Guru is God come to us in a form in which he can touch us, talk to us, feel for us, love us, and take us to his eternal, absolute Essence. Guru is the highest being, the greatest and the grandest. People cry – God, God, God – but where is he? Is he distinct from Guru? Just now (so long as we are on the level of the intellect and senses, and have not awakened our higher faculty of transport, nor found access into higher transcendent planes),

God is only an idea, subjective and personal. But Guru is before us in flesh and blood; he has objective reality; him we can perceive with our senses.

Is not perception more real than idea? We blame Plato for assigning a greater reality to his 'Ideas' than to things, but in our own case, as long as we rely only on intellect, by placing God above Guru, we commit the same blunder. Perception is our direct knowledge of the world, it is our primary experience of reality on the physical plane. All our ideas, which are derived from it, are secondary. Hence in this world, for any but the God-realized among us, Guru is more real than God.

God is the essence of the mystic's being. He is omnipresent and absolute, but his visible form in this world is the mystic adept. God is, so to speak, the treasure to which mystics have the key. Mystics are the treasurers. Since the treasure is in the treasurer's control, the treasurer for us comes first. We cannot realize God save through the mystic adept; therefore out of love and gratitude mystics often praise the Guru even more than God!

In absolute truth God and the mystics are no doubt identical, but just now we are not in the absolute stage, but on the physical plane. Here as human beings, we experience relative truth, but only talk of absolute truth. It is the mystic form or physical manifestation of God that can be of use to us here, and consequently for us the mystic form of God is what we seek out of all his forms. In other words, for us human beings, Guru comes before God.

This is not a comparison of their essence or being as such, which it cannot be as their essence is the same, but a comparison of the practical help they render us in their different manifestations – as the transcendent Absolute and as a human being. God comes to our level in the form of the Guru and takes us out of all delusion and ignorance, pain and misery. Therefore, for us, the mystic adept is obviously the greatest being, and out of their love for God, many mystics exclaim that Guru is greater than God.

गुरु हैं अगम अपार अनामी । गुरु बिन दूसर और न जानी ॥
 नहिं ब्रह्मा नहिं विष्णु महेशा । नहिं ईश्वर परमेश्वर शेषा ॥
 राम कृष्ण नहिं दस औतारी । व्यास वशिष्ठ न आदि कुमारी ॥ ...
 आत्म परमात्म नहिं मानूं । अक्षर निःअक्षर नहिं जानूं ॥
 सत्तनाम जानूं न अनामी । लिख ग्रन्थ सब करत बखानी ॥
 सब को करूं प्रनाम जोड़ कर । पर कोई नहिं सतगुरु सम सर ॥
 सतगुरु कृपा सबन को जाना । बिन सतगुरु कैसे पहिचाना ॥ ...
 सतगुरु सब का भेद बखानें । अब किसको गुरु से बढ़ जानें ॥

Guru is the ultimate, absolute Supreme Lord;
 I know not any other save the Guru.
 Nor Brahma, nor Vishnu nor Shiva,
 Nor Ishwar (Niranjan) nor Parmeshwar (Brahm or Om),
 Nor Shesh Nag, nor Rama, nor Krishna,
 Nor (any other of) the ten Incarnations,
 Nor Vyas Rishi, nor Vashisht, nor (the goddess) Shakti....
 Nor atma (spirit), nor Parmatma (supreme Spirit),
 Nor Akshar Purush (Parbrahm), nor Neh Akshar (Sohang),
 Nor Satnam, nor Anami – none do I acknowledge.
 People only read of them as written in books;
 To all I bow with folded hands,
 But equal to Satguru is none.
 By the grace of Satguru have I come to know them all;
 How without Satguru can anyone know them?...
 Satguru telleth us the secret of all;
 Whom can we, therefore, consider as greater than Guru?

SOAMI JI, SAR BACHAN CHHAND BAND 8:1:3-13

This is perhaps a slightly subtle question, but it is the secret of bhakti, and if we understand this point of view, there should be no difficulty in grasping it. As already pointed out, here we are not discussing absolute truth, but stating only a relative truth. As human beings we want relative truth, for our very existence

is of relative reality. Absolute truth is out of place here. For us, Guru is the very highest being, greater than all other beings of heaven and earth, of this world and the next. For human beings, Guru is certainly greater than God, for the latter is out of their sphere altogether and therefore for them practically non-existent. Hence in this world it shall ever be true that Guru is greater than God.

गुरु हैं बड़ गोविन्द तें, मन में देखु बिचार ।
हरि सुमिरै सो वार है, गुरु सुमिरै सो पार ॥

Guru is greater than God;
O consider and weigh thou this in thy mind.
Who repeateth the name of God remaineth on this side,
But who taketh the Name of Guru goeth across.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.3:34

The one who does Shabd practice as instructed by his Guru goes beyond the ocean of phenomena and finds absolute reality. When once we have adopted Guru, for us he is God, all saints, all prophets, incarnations and everything.

چونکہ کردی ذاتِ مرشد را قبول ہم خدا در ذائقہ آمد ہم رسول

When the person of the Master hast thou accepted,
In his person are included God and the Prophet.

RUMI, IN *KITAB AL-BAL'AT*

शिवे रुष्टे गुरुस्त्राता, गुरै रुष्टे न काश्चन ॥

If Shiva (God) be displeased, Guru can save us,
But if the Guru is displeased, none is there to save us.

HINDU SHAstra, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

दोहा

हरि किरपा जो होय तो, नाहीं होय तो नाहिं ।
पै गुरु किरपा दया बिन, सकल बुद्धि बहि जाहिं ॥

चौपाई

राम तजुँ पै गुरु न बिसारुँ । गुरु के सम हरि कूँ न निहारुँ ॥
हरि ने जन्म दियो जग माहीं । गुरु ने आवागवन छुटाहीं ॥
हरि ने पाँच चोर दिये साथ । गुरु ने लई छुटाय अनाथा ॥
हरि ने कुटँब जाल में गेरी । गुरु ने काटी ममता बेरी ॥
हरि ने रोग भोग उरझायौ । गुरु जोगो कर सबै छुटायौ ॥
हरि ने कर्म धरम भरमायौ । गुरु ने आतम रूप लखायौ ॥
हरि ने मो सँ आप छिपायौ । गुरु दीपक दै ताहि दिखायो ॥
फिर हरि बंध मुक्ति गति लाये । गुरु ने सब ही भर्म मिटाये ॥
चरनदास पर तन मन वारुँ । गुरु न तजुँ हरि को तज डारुँ ॥
चरनदास महिमा अधिकारुँ । सर्वस वारै सहजो बारुँ ॥

If God be merciful to me, ('tis good);
If not, even then 'tis all right.
But without the grace and mercy of Guru
All my wit availeth me not.

God shall I leave, but Guru will I never forget;
I consider not God as equal to Guru.
God gave me birth in the world,
But Guru hath taken me out
Of the cycle of birth and death.
God set five thieves (the five passions) upon me,
But Guru hath saved me, poor helpless creature.
God cast me into the net of family attachment,
But Guru hath cut off my chain of worldly ties.
God entangled me in worldly pleasure and pain,
But by making me a mystic,
Guru hath liberated me from all these.

God threw me into the delusion of karma (actions),
 But Guru hath revealed to me my inner soul.
 God hid himself from me,
 But by giving the lamp (of mystic vision)
 Hath Guru shown Him to me.
 Then God created salvation and bondage,
 But Guru hath removed all my darkness and ignorance.
 To Charandas shall I sacrifice all my body and mind;
 Oh, never shall I leave my Guru,
 Rather God shall I give up....
 The praise of Charandas is very high;
 Sahjo Bai sacrificeth her all to him.

SAHJO BAI, *SAHJO BAI KI BANI*, P. 3-4

गुरु गोबिंद दोऊ खड़े, का के लागौँ पाँय ।
 बलिहारी गुरु आपने, जिन गोबिंद दियो बताय ।

Guru and God both are before me –
 At whose feet shall I fall?
 To my Guru do I sacrifice myself,
 For he hath shown God to me.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.2:10

5 Power of love

Love's power is great, and wonderful is its daring. It jumps over all obstacles and barriers.

ਸੋਪਾਂ ਬਾੜ ਸਮੁੰਦ ਘਰ ਜ਼ੋਰਾਂ ਪਏ ਬੁਕੱਨ ।
 ਜ ਜਮ ਹੋਵ ਪਾਹੁਰੂ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀ ਨਾਹੀਂ ਰੁਕੱਨ ॥

If in the ocean is the abode (of the Beloved),
 If serpents form a hedge all round it,

If lions are roaring in the way,
And if the angel of death is the sentry at the gate,
(Even then) the lover cannot be kept back (from it).

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Nothing can prevent a lover from going to his beloved Friend,
for that person is his whole world.

در ضمیر مانے گنجید بغیر از دوست کس ہر دو عالم را بدشمن دہ کہ مارا دوست بس

In my heart none save my Friend findeth room;
O give thou both the worlds to my enemies,
For enough is my Friend for me.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.247

The lover cares neither for the world, nor for religion or God; his beloved is God to him and everything is for him. Love transcends all distinctions of high and low, caste and creed, of profession and occupation, religion and sect.

در آں رہ نیست خارے اختیارے نہ تر سائی ست ایں رہ نہ یہودی

On this path there is no thorn of self-will,
Nor is anyone a Christian or a Jew.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.402

Where there is love, there is no law; the only law is the will of the Beloved. Love itself is the highest law; it is the greatest power in the universe. The fire of devotion consumes all worldly desires, and the storm of love carries before it all impure and evil thoughts. Fortunate indeed are those who love the Lord.

عشق می گوید بگوشت پست پست صید بودن خوشتر از صیادیت

Gently in my ear doth Love say:
Falling prey to is better than to prey upon.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* V:411

To be shot by the arrow of love is better than making others victims to our cleverness. If we try, we can have worldly riches, honour and learning, but the pain of love in the heart is indeed hard to find.

خزینہاںست مرا بہ ز نقد علم و ادب نجاست آہ سحر گاہ و نالہ اول شب

Of learning and culture do I have
With me whole treasures;
But where is the sigh of the morning,
And the tear of the early night?

HAFIZ, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

It is love and devotion alone that can unite us with the mystic adept and God permanently and irresistibly, that can transform our being and make us divine.

دل عاشق کجا ز ساغر سرشار بکشائید آب خضر کے لب تشنہ دیدار بکشائید

How can the wine goblet
Open the heart of the lover?
How can lips athirst for a glimpse
Of the Beloved's face be opened by nectar?

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Love is a treasure; love is an elixir; love is a spiritual spark that burns all the filth of the heart. It is a divine collyrium that opens the inner eye of the soul. And if we love God, he also loves us.

در دل تو میر حق چوں شد دو تو هست حق را بیگمانے میر تو

When love for God hath taken hold of thy heart,
Be thou sure, God also loveth thee.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

مستی آگاہ از لطف خدا بچو عاشق ہر زمان بیند ترا

Of the grace of God thou knowest not,
For every moment like a lover doth he behold thee.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.40

بعشق او شود دنیا و دیں مست اگر مستانہ آوازے بر آرم

For His love would this world
And the next run mad,
If in my ecstasy uttered I a shout.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR* 67, P.74

This is the love of the transcendent Shabd; this divine love makes all people mad with spiritual intoxication with God, but that true love can be had from the perfect mystic alone.

رازِ درون پرده زندانِ مست پرس کیس حال نیست صوفیِ عالی مقام را

From the enraptured mystics
Do thou ask the secret of the inner chamber,
For 'tis known not to Sufis of high position.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.38

One who tastes the wine of divine love is transported to the heights of absolute reality.

ز ملک تا ملکوتش حجاب برگیرند هر آنکه که خدمت جامِ جهاں نما بکند

From the king (God) to his kingdom (Universe)
Is lifted the veil by him
Who serveth the world-illuminating cup.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.146

به عشق زنده بود جان مرد صاحب دل اگر تو عشق نداری برو که معذورى

By love is kept alive the mystic's soul.
O go thou away if thou hast no love,
For helpless art thou.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.391

هرگز نمیرد آنکه دلش زنده شده به عشق ثبت است بر جریده عالم دوام

The one whose heart
Hath been enlivened by love never dieth.
Eternally on the register of our world
Is this inscribed.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.35

6 Transcendence of love

True love goes beyond all pairs of opposites and above all duality and relativity. Mystic love transcends all limitations; it absorbs the whole being of the lover, who wants neither power nor pelf, neither position nor prosperity, neither fame nor glory, neither this world nor the next, neither heaven nor earth, neither pleasure nor pain, neither salvation nor bondage, nothing, nothing at all but his Beloved. The personality of the Beloved spreads out and fills all space; it becomes the whole world of the lover; it becomes his

whole heaven, too; it becomes his whole existence and being. He wants his beloved Lord only; he wants his pleasure; he wants his will. Let plenty come to him or poverty, fame or disgrace, pleasure or pain, comfort or discomfort, health or disease. Whatever his lot, it is all the same for him, because he is above all these, he is beyond human attachment and weakness of the flesh. His thought is solely riveted to the Lord, his life is wholly devoted to his will.

مانے گویم نعمت یا بلا خواہیم و بس بلکہ ماواں ہم رضائے دوست را خواہیم و بس
گر رضائے دوست مارا در بلا خواہد رسید ما ہمیشہ خویشی را مبتلا خواہیم و بس
ہر کے از تو بقدر خود مرادے خواستد ما مراد خویشی را از تو ترا خواہیم و بس

I say not that I desire pleasure or pain;
Rather ever I desire the will of my Friend.
If my Friend willeth that troubles come to me,
Ever I desire to be drowned in troubles.
According to his own worth doth everyone
Ask favours from thee, O Lord,
But my desire is to ask from thee
Thine own self, and that's all.

MUINUDDIN CHISHTI, *DIVAN-I GHARIB NAWAZ*, P.105

گویند تمنائے از دوست بکن سعدی تجھ دوست نخواہد کرد از دوست تمنائے

From thy Friend, they say, ask a favour, O Sa'di;
But save the Friend himself
Nothing else of the Friend shall I ask.

SA'DI, *KULLIYAT-I SA'DI (TAYYIBAT)*, P.338

Praying to God for things of the world is to step down from the pedestal of love; not to be content with his decrees is to fall down from the pinnacle of devotion.

آرزو جستن بود بگریختن پیش عدلش خون تقوی ریختن

Desire seeking is fleeing (from God);
'Tis shedding the blood of piety
In the presence of his justice.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* VI:377

Pure love is to yield to his will with humble submission and grateful resignation; nay, it is to find pleasure in all his doings. Pleasant or unpleasant, whatever he does is for our good. His decrees are final; his wisdom is perfect. In true devotion, there is no scope for dissatisfaction or resentment, no room for difference or disagreement. What he wills is the best.

I do not choose the best, but the best chooses me.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Whatever falls to his lot is welcome; whatever is written in his fate is good. He desires neither the world nor worldly gains, nor does he think of heaven. He transcends all such thoughts and ideas; he flies up into the sphere of transport and leaves the plane of the senses and intellect behind.

بارگاہ بگزار ایس مردار را خورد بشکن شیعه پندار را

To dogs leave thou this carrion, the world.
Break thou into pieces the glass of the intellect.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Unless we set aside all our wisdom and take the wisdom of devotion, unless we turn out the world from our heart and fill it with divine love, we cannot enter the sphere of transport or have mystic intuition. Unless we go beyond the sphere of desire and above the domain of the intellect, we cannot behold the face of

the beloved Lord. Love knows no bounds; it is transcendent; it transcends all morality and religion, all thoughts and desires, all learning and wisdom. It takes us beyond good and evil, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond all notions and ideas, even beyond our own self. It annihilates our egoism and destroys our separate existence; it identifies our inner reality with the being of the Beloved.

خویشتن کردم فراموش تا بدیدم روئے یار مست می گردم بهر سوا ز جمالِ آں نگار

When I forgot myself,
Then beheld I the face of my Beloved,
And on every side did the beauty of the Beloved
Enrapture me.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Love is a sort of frenzy that takes up the whole of our being, but this divine frenzy transports us to transcendent realms and opens to the eye of our soul eternal secrets of God; this divine madness takes us out of the narrow confines of the intellect and lands us in the vast realm of mystic reality; it liberates us from the thralldom of the flesh, from the imprisonment of worldly desires.

قصر فردوس پیا داشِ عمل می بخشند ما که رندیم و گدا دیر مغاں ما را بس

Who do good deeds,
The palace of paradise is their reward.
But for the dissolute destitute that I am,
The hallowed land of my Master is enough.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P. 249

For those who drink from the vintage of love, the will of the Lord is sweet here and hereafter; they are happy to do his biddings and carry out his will.

عاشق را گرد آتش می‌پسند و لطف دوست تنگ چشم گر نظر بر چشمه کوثر کنم

If throwing the lovers into fire is the will of the Beloved,
Then short-sighted shall I be
If I cast a look towards the spring of nectar.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.333

The will of the Beloved is supreme; it is sweeter than everything else; it is dearer than life itself. Intense love transcends even morality and religion; it transcends the distinction between good and evil; it goes beyond all words and thoughts. Even the idea of separation and union is transcended. The lover is overwhelmed with this magnetic attraction, so much so that nothing of the self is left but that pinch and pain of love. All thoughts, all desires, all notions and ideas, all feelings and emotions, even instincts and natural passions are drowned in this all-enveloping love. His being becomes soaked in love and he becomes love personified.

عاشق یارم مرا با کفر و با ایمان چه کار تشنه دردم مرا با وصل و با بجزاں چه کار

The lover of my Friend am I –
What concern have I with belief and heresy?
For the pain of love am I athirst –
In union and separation what interest have I?

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.232

This is the intensity of love, this is its transcendence. But without devotion to a Master, true love cannot be attained; worldly-minded people know it not.

بر در میخانه رفتن کار یک رنگاں بود خود فروشاں را بکوئی فروشاں راه نیست

Going to the wine tavern
Is the work of the steadfast and sincere;
The self-sellers find not the way to the wine-sellers.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.84, 28:9

7 Conclusion

Thus for our practical guidance the conclusion is that we should find a true and perfect Shabd mystic and give him our sincere devotion, for without such an adept we cannot get hold of the transcendent Shabd that can solve our fundamental problems of life. Hence we should concentrate all our attention on this point. We should sacrifice our all to the mystic adept, for it is only through such love and devotion that we can face the obstacles of the way and reach our beloved Lord. Devotion is essential in mystic training, but sometimes the fear of public opinion and adverse criticism stands in our way.

گفتا کہ بود ہمرہ گفتم خیالت اے شہ گفتا کہ خواندت اینجا گفتم کہ بوئے جامت
گفتا کہ راہ خالیست گفتم کہ خوف رہزن گفتا کہ کیست رہزن گفتم کہ ایس ملامت

"Who was with thee?" saith he;
"Thy thought, O Lord," said I.
"Who called thee here?" saith he;
"The fragrance of Thy cup," said I.
"Was the way clear?" saith he;
"No, there was fear of robbers," said I.
"What robbers?" saith he;
"Worldly disgrace," said I.

RUMI, *DIVAN-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ*, P.73

This fear of disgrace keeps many from going to the mystic adept, but we should not be concerned about disgrace and dishonour. Fearlessly and boldly should we seek the true Guru and fall at his holy feet. Then shall he open Shabd in us; then shall he reveal God to us. Devotion to the Guru is the supreme secret of mystic transport and spiritual realization.

भक्ति दान मोहिं दीजिये, गुरु देवन के देव ।
और नहीं कछु चाहिये, निसु दिन तेरी सेव ॥

Give me the boon of devotion,
O my Guru, O God of gods.
Nothing more do I desire
Save Thy service day and night.

KABIR, *KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH*, P.98:29

CHAPTER FIVE

Concluding

1 Recapitulation

We started with a number of fundamental problems of life which concern all human beings and demand a prompt solution. We saw that three classes of people attempted to solve these vital problems – philosophers, religious people and mystics – but that these could be solved by mystic knowledge alone.

Mystic insight is beyond the senses and intellect, and therefore those solutions cannot be known or grasped with the intellect; they lie hidden in the transcendent regions of absolute reality. Whoever wants to find those solutions must himself (with his soul) go by mystic transport into those subtle regions and know them by firsthand personal experience of spiritual transcendent entities.

In mysticism itself there are various methods and all are not equally efficacious. Out of all the mystic practices, Shabd Yoga can solve all our problems satisfactorily and completely.

Shabd Yoga, which opens our inner eye and transports our soul to transcendent regions of pure spirituality, cannot be practised without a perfect adept of our own day, a Guru living now in flesh and blood. Books and faith in mystics of old times will not do. Shabd is purely transcendent and therefore cannot be

conveyed through language; it goes directly from one soul to another soul living on the same plane of existence.

Guru is one who has realized his identity with the Supreme Being and therefore devotion to him is devotion to God. Shabd practice is the path of devotion; it is the highest bhakti yoga. Through devotion doth the disciple become one with Guru; through devotion doth he realize his oneness with Shabd and God. Devotion to the Perfect Guru is the highest treasure in the world and essential for spiritual realization.

2 Confusion of one plane with another

a. How every plane looks final

As already mentioned, there are several stages or planes in subtle transcendent regions, but every plane appears to be the very last, inasmuch as it is complete in itself and comprehends and penetrates everything beneath it; it is the controlling centre and source of all creation below. Every plane depends for its energy and sustenance on the plane just above it, and thus each plane seems to be the final source and fountainhead of all energy and power.

If we confine our attention to the physical and the astral planes, the subtle astral plane looks to be the last plane, but when we go further up into causal creation, we come to know that the astral world depends on the causal and is but a small extension or projection of it, so to speak. The Deputy Commissioner is the highest authority in his district, but if we widen our view to include the whole province, we shall see that the Lieutenant-Governor is the head, not the Deputy Commissioner. When we broaden our outlook still further, we realize that the Lieutenant-Governor is also under the Governor or Viceroy who, in his own turn, is under the King.

This is a very crude simile, but will suffice to illustrate the point. The deity of the first plane, the astral, is the Deputy Commissioner

of his district, but Om or Brahm is the Lieutenant Governor of his province – the whole creation, physical, astral, and causal. However, he too is neither the absolute monarch nor sovereign over the whole country. He is under Parbrahm, the Governor or Viceroy who, in his turn, is under Sat Purush, the King.

Now, an ordinary illiterate person who has not travelled much and whose view is consequently limited to the district in which he lives knows no higher authority than the Deputy Commissioner. Therefore, he believes him to be the final authority, but those who go out of the district into other parts of the province find that the Deputy Commissioner is under the Lieutenant Governor. For them the latter is the sole master and ruler, but those who go out of the province and move about the length and breadth of the country look upon the Governor or Viceroy as the final authority. However, they too are mistaken.

The true king is a higher authority; Sat Purush is the sovereign Lord over all; he is the sole Monarch. There are many Brahms under him who rule over their respective Brahmands or universes. Those people who reach the region of Brahm (ब्रह्म) or Om (ओम्) may look upon him as the final God, but those who go beyond know that Brahm is but a Lieutenant Governor, and that the true King is Sat Purush (पुरुष), who is the final Lord of all.

Those who have read only up to the fifth primary class say that knowledge is very vast, and those who study further and pass the eighth middle class say the same thing. Some pass the matric (school leaving certificate) and others F. A. (first year of college); some others take their degrees, and still others read for higher degrees, but all say that knowledge is very vast. Although they all say the same thing in the same words, yet their qualifications are different. Similarly mystics of all grades say that God is infinite, omnipresent, omniscient and so on, but their qualifications and positions are different. We should not take them all to be equal or to have reached the same spiritual stage.

But many people make this mistake; they confuse Brahm (ब्रह्म) or Om (ओम्), the God of this universe of ours, with Sat Purush (सत् पुरुष), the ultimate Lord of all universes and planes. He is the final absolute Reality; Brahm is an existence of the second order. We look upon Brahm or Om as our God, but he is not our God. Our true God is Sat Purush.

As Sat Purush, the absolute, ultimate Lord, should not be confused with Brahm, the governor of our universe, so saints (सन्त) or Shabd mystics should not be confused with prophets and incarnations (अवतार), nor should Shabd Yoga be confused with other mystic practices and religious creeds. The path of Shabd is distinct from all religions and creeds.

Even if we are students of one of the primary classes, or even if we are altogether illiterate, yet we need not confuse earning an MA with matriculation. If we are anxious to be true MAs, to go to the highest spiritual plane in the lap of the transcendent Absolute, out of the reach of creation and dissolution, beyond causation and phenomena, we should seek Shabd mystics and give them our devotion, rather than go after any other mystics of lower orders.

b. Reflection in subtle planes

Moreover, below the absolute plane of Sat Lok or Sat Purush, the various planes are so created that there are three planes, each having six stages, with each plane being a reflection of the one above it. The three planes are technically known as Pind (पिण्ड), And (अण्ड) and Brahmand (ब्रह्माण्ड). The reflection of Brahmand falls in And, and the plane of And is reflected in Pind.

c. Four stages in Sat Lok and six stages in each plane of Kal Desh (काल देश)

(1) Four stages of Sat Lok or Dayal Desh (दयाल देश)

- Anami (अनामी) or Nameless
- Agam (अगम)
- Alakh (अलख)
- Sat Lok or Sach Khand (सत्त लोक)

These four stages are indestructible, beyond all dissolution and decay; they are the ocean of absolute transcendent spirituality, with the light of millions and billions of suns and moons. They are our true home, the essence of all existence and being, the root of ultimate, final reality, the source and fountainhead of all knowledge, bliss and love. Our ideal should be to reach back to this true home of our soul.

(2) *Three planes of Kal Desh* (कालदेश)

A. Maha Kal's plane or the six stages of Brahmand (ब्रह्माण्ड):

1. Two-petalled lotus (दोदल कँवल) in Bhanwar Gupha (भँवर गुफा)
2. Sixteen-petalled lotus (सोलहदल कँवल) at the top of Maha Sunn (महासुन्न)
3. Twelve-petalled lotus (बारहदल कँवल) in Sahaj Deep (सहज दीप)
4. Eight-petalled lotus (अष्टदल कँवल) in the upper part of Parbrahm (पारब्रह्म)
5. Six-petalled lotus (छःदल कँवल) in the lower part of Parbrahm (पारब्रह्म)
6. Four-petalled lotus (चारदल कँवल) in the upper part of Trikuti (त्रिकुटी)

These six stages of Maha Kal (महाकाल) are not destroyed in ordinary Pralaya (प्रलय) or Dissolution, but are annihilated only in Maha Pralaya (महाप्रलय), Grand Dissolution.

B. Kal's plane or the six stages of And (अण्ड):

1. Two-petalled lotus (दोदल कँवल) in the lower part of Trikuti (त्रिकुटी).
2. Sixteen-petalled lotus (सोलहदल कँवल) in Set Sunn (सेत सुन्न).
3. Twelve-petalled lotus (बारहदल कँवल) in Sahansdal Kamal (सहसदल कँवल). The petals denote Jyoti (ज्योति), Niranjana (निरंजन), and ten dhuns (धुनें) or melodies.
4. Eight-petalled lotus (अष्टदल कँवल) in tisra til (तीसरा तिल), the third eye. The petals denote the five tattvas (तत्त्व) or elements and three gunas (गुण) or qualities.
5. Six-petalled lotus (छःदल कँवल) below tisra til (तीसरा तिल). The petals denote six powers or currents: *janm* (जन्म), birth; *asti* (अस्ति), existence; *parinaam* (परिणाम), result or change; *vidhi* (वृद्धि), growth; *kshai* (क्षय), decay; and *mrityu* (मृत्यु), death.
6. Four-petalled lotus (चारदल कँवल) in *antahkaran* (अन्तःकर्ण), the seat of the mind. The petals denote the mind's four faculties: *manas* (मन), the lower mind, which registers impressions, likes and dislikes; *buddhi* (बुद्धि), discrimination, intellect or thinking; *chitt* (चित्त), memory; and *ahankaar* (अहंकार), ego or will.

These six stages of Kal (काल) are destroyed in ordinary Pralaya (प्रलय) or Dissolution, as well as in Maha Pralaya (महाप्रलय) or Grand Dissolution. This plane is a reflection of the causal-spiritual plane and consequently the number of petals at each stage here is the same as in the corresponding stage of the reflected plane. This is a trick played by Kal; he has made in the lower planes a copy of the higher centres so that people aiming at those higher centres may be deceived by these lower copies and kept here.

C. Maya's plane or the six stages of Pind (पिण्ड):

1. Two-petalled lotus (दोदल कैवल) behind the eyes
2. Sixteen-petalled lotus (छःदल कैवल) in *kantha* (कंठ) or throat
3. Twelve-petalled lotus (बारहदल कैवल) in *hridaya* (हृदय) or heart
4. Eight-petalled lotus (अष्टदल कैवल) in *naabhi* (नाभी) or navel
5. Six-petalled lotus (छःदल कैवल) in *indri* (इन्द्री) or the organ of reproduction
6. Four-petalled lotus (चारदल कैवल) in *guda* (गुदा) or perineum

These six stages have been created by Maya and are a reflection of the stages of And. This is the trick of Maya. In the lower material creation she has made an imitation of Kal's centres so that people who really aim at reaching those higher centres may be deceived by these copies of Maya and kept in these lowest stages.

The sun is in the sky, but its reflection falls in a pool, and that casts an image on the adjoining wall. The sun on the wall has little of the heat and brightness of the actual sun; it even lacks its round shape; it is only a patch of light. But although not hot like its original, the sun in the water is a better reflection than the sun on the wall. Similarly the six focuses or chakras (चक्र) of maya in *pind* (the physical body) are a very crude copy of the creation in Brahmand and have neither the spirituality nor the power of those higher centres.

आदि माया कीन्ही चतुराई, झूठी बाजी पिंग दिखाई ।
अवगति रचन रची अंड माहीं ता का प्रतिबिंब डारा है ॥

The primal Maya hath played a clever trick.
A false show in Pind (physical body) she hath created.
She produced in And (astral body)
A creation of a lower order,
The reflection of which she hath thrown below.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI* VOL.1, P.67:31

The true reflection of Brahmand is in And, but the creation in Pind is sham-transcendent, for it is the reflection of a reflection. As already pointed out, it is no use our bothering about these six stages of subtle matter, for there is no spirituality here, only material forces called gods and goddesses.

d. Table of chakras or energy centres

See the table on the next page for the energy centres in the physical, astral, and causal-spiritual planes.

Six Energy Centres
in the Physical, Astral and Causal-spiritual Planes
 (Reflections of reflections)

	Physical plane or Pind Ruler: Maya	Astral plane or And Ruler: Kal	Causal- spiritual plane or Brahmand Ruler: Maha Kal	Number of lotus petals
1	Behind the Eyes	Trikuti (lower part)	Bhanwar Gupha	2
2	Kantha	Set Sunn (upper part) Astral plane	Top of Maha Sunn	16
3	Hridaya	Sahansdal Kamal ज्योति, निरंजन, दस धुनें	Sahaj Deep	12
4	Naabhi	Tisra Til (or third eye) 5 tattwas & 3 gunas	Upper part of Daswan Dwar (or of Parbrahm)	8
5	Indri	Below Tisra Til जन्म, अस्ति, प्रणाम, मृत्यु, बुद्धि, क्षय	Lower part of Daswan Dwar (or of Parbrahm)	6
6	Guda	Antahkaran मन, बुद्धि, चित्त, अहंकार	Trikuti (upper part)	4

e. False copies in And (अण्ड) of the highest spiritual realms

But apart from this, Kal has played another trick. Within the boundaries of And (अण्ड) he has created stages and named them after the highest spiritual realms from Anami downwards; he has made false imitations of Anami, Agam, Alakh, Sat Nam, Sohang, Parbrahm and so on in order to mislead the seekers who want to go into those highest spiritual planes.

कर नैनों दीदार यह पिंड से न्यारा है ।
 तू हिरदे सोच विचार यह अंड मँझारा है ॥ ...
 सोड़ अंड को अवगत राई, अमर कोट अकह नकल बनाई ।
 सुद्ध ब्रह्म पद तहँ ठहराई, सों नाम अनामी धारा है ।
 सतवीं सुन्न अंड के माहीं, झिलमिलहट की नकल बनाई ।
 महाकाल तहं आन रहाई, सो अगम पुरुष उच्चार है ।
 छठवीं सुन्न जो अंड मँझारा, अगम महल की नकल सुधारा ।
 निरगुण काल तहाँ पग धारा, सो अलख पुरुष कहु न्यारा है ।
 पंचम सुन्न जो अंड के माहीं, सत्तलोक की नकल बनाई ।
 माया सहित निरंजन राई, सो सत्त पुरुष दीदारा है ।
 चौथी सुन्न अंड के माहीं, पद निर्बान की नकल बनाई ।
 अविगत कला है सतगुर आई, सो सोहं पद सारा है ।
 तीजी सुन्न की सुनो बड़ाई, एक सुन्न के दोय बनाई ।
 ऊपर महासुन्न अधिकाई, नीचे सुन्न पसारा है ।

O see thou with thine eyes, 'tis different from Pind;
 O think thou in thy mind, 'tis in And....
 Kal hath made an imitation
 Of the eternal castle in And.
 Of Shudh Brahm (pure Brahm) is that the seat,
 But 'tis named Anami.

The seventh Sunn in And he hath made an imitation
 Of the Agam palace. Resideth there Maha Kal,
 But 'tis called Agam Purush.

The sixth Sunn in And he hath made
 An imitation of the lustrous sphere.
 Resideth there Nirgun Kal (Kal without qualities),
 But 'tis called the transcendent Alakh Purush.

The fifth Sunn in And he hath made
 An imitation of Sat Lok.
 Resideth there Niranjan with Maya,
 But 'tis termed Sat Purush.

The fourth Sunn in And he hath made
 An imitation of Nirvana stage.
 Kal, a power of a lower order,
 Appeareth there as Satguru;
 That is termed Sohang.

Listen thou to the praise of the third Sunn;
 Of one Sunn hath he made two.
 The upper part is termed Maha Sunn,
 And the lower, the region of Sunn.

KABIR, *KABIR SAHIB KI SHABDAVALI* VOL.1, P.67-68

Without a perfect mystic adept of Shabd Yoga, it is not possible to find access into the true and real absolute plane of Sat Lok, because there are so many traps and snares of Kal in the way.

Further, being imitation or false copies, some stages of the lower planes bear the same name as those of the higher ones, and this also leads to confusion. For instance Trikuti (त्रिकुटी) is the name of several places, the highest of them all being the stage of Om. That is the real Trikuti, the Trikuti of Shabd mystics, but below it there are others of the same name, which are inferior kinds of creation. The tip of the nose is also called *trikuti*.

Similarly there are a number of places which go by the name of Sunn (सुन्न). There are as many as twenty-two Sunns, but the

highest Sunn is in the purely spiritual region of Parbrahm (पारब्रह्म), which is also called Daswan Dwar (दसवाँ द्वार) or the tenth door. The tenth door is a term for *tisra til* (तीसरा तिल) or the third eye as well. Sohang (सोहं) is likewise associated with several centres, the highest Sohang being above Parbrahm and beyond Maha Sunn. That subtle plane of rare transcendence should not be confused with the practice called *swaasa-sohang* (स्वासा सोहं), for instance, or with the Sohang of pranayam, which refers to a much lower plane. Similarly, the word *anahad* (अनहद) is used in various senses. The fourth stage in the material creation (पिण्ड), the heart centre (हृदय चक्र), is also termed the *anahad chakra* (अनहद चक्र) by yogis, but there is no real Anahad Shabd there. True Shabd begins from above the eyes.

Without acquaintance with mystic terminology and its technicalities, one is liable to take one stage for another and thus fall into error. Hence to avoid pitfalls, we should depend, not on books, but on a living personality. A contemporary mystic can remove our difficulties as they arise, guiding us at each step.

The sayings of mystics

Only mystics can well understand and explain.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

f. Relative worth of different planes

As we have said, there are several different planes and each plane has a god of its own. Sometimes people question: Are there many gods? Well, in this we should be quite clear that God is only one; he is never more than one, although his manifestations are many and of different degrees of reality and spirituality. His true being is eternally one but there are several grades of reality.

At the top is Sat Lok, which is the highest and absolute reality, but as we come down, it is all relative existence. The farther down a place is from Sat Lok, the lower is the nature or grade of

its reality. Thus Sohang is a reality of the second order, Parbrahm of the third order, Brahm of the fourth order, and Niranjan of the fifth order. This physical creation of ours is a reality of the lowest grade; here reality is so completely hidden that it appears as all maya or phenomena.

It is said that once a king built a multi-storeyed palace. On the ground floor, he scattered copper and worthless things, on the first floor silver, on the second gold, on the third rubies and pearls, on the fourth diamonds, and so on. At the top, he sat himself in all his glory and splendour. He ordered all the courts and offices to be closed and declared a public holiday throughout his kingdom. After opening all the doors of his palace, he invited people to take away, free and gratis, whatever they could lay their hands on, and whatever pleased their fancy. Most people remained on the ground floor, collected copper and went away. A few climbed up to the first storey and collected silver. Very few took the trouble of going further up to the second storey and collected gold. And extremely few, who were less greedy, ascended higher up and collected rubies, pearls and diamonds. One brave man, who had no greed at all, went up to the top and found the king, who got up, embraced him and gave him his throne.

This is an allegory. All people want to find reality, but most of them are satisfied with copper or the material objects of this world. They remain on the physical plane. Some keen seekers go up to the plane of Niranjan, for example, yogis, and collect silver or astral goods. A few, for example yogishwars, go further up to the region of Trikuti and collect gold or causal entities. Very few indeed, such as sadhs, go beyond to the stage of Parbrahm and collect rubies and pearls or spiritual treasures. Those rare ones who go to the next higher stage, Sohang, collect diamonds. But one brave person, the mystic adept (सतगुरु), goes to the top and beholds the supreme Lord of all, Sat Purush, the final King, who embraces him and gives him His throne. The adept thus becomes the ultimate

God himself. Then out of mercy for other people, he comes down to the ground floor, into this world, and extends his gracious invitation to all to accompany him up into the highest blissful regions. Those who go to him and give him their sincere devotion are taken by him to the top and united with the absolute Lord.

3 Mystic similes and metaphors

To express themselves mystics make use of those words and phrases which they find current among the people. They illustrate their points by using common similes and metaphors or ordinary language. This, however, does not necessarily imply that such similes and metaphors are in themselves true. They may be true, they may be false; mystics do not touch them. Their object is neither to reform the language, nor to improve our knowledge of this world. They want only to take us to our Heavenly Father and, to this end, they deliver their message through the means available to them.

In this world, language is the only means of conveying our thoughts to others, but it is only a means; and therefore when we have succeeded in grasping the idea of the speaker (or the writer, as the case may be), we need not go to the literal, grammatical or logical meanings of his words. Mystics talk of transcendent entities; they say almost nothing of the things of this world. Therefore, for knowledge of this world we should not open their books, nor construe their language to yield rules for social dealings.

Now, in mystic writings we find at various places a mention of *suhaagan* (सुहागन), a happily married woman who has the affection of her husband, and *duhaagan* (दुहागन), a widow, one deprived of her husband's love. But mystics do not want to tell us of the various kinds of wives; they only want to convey to us that, as there are two kinds of wives, so there are two sorts of people in the world: *suhaagan* denotes a *gurmukh* (गुरुमुख) – one who loves and is loved by his Guru; and *duhaagan* denotes a *manmukh* (मनमुख)

– the worldly-minded person who loves only the world and its objects and is therefore deprived of spiritual love.

Similarly mystics mention the swan or *hansa* (हंस), or the phoenix, to denote an enlightened soul, but it does not necessarily mean that they believe in the existence of such a bird in this world. A phoenix is the emblem of immortality, and the person who has attained the transcendent planes of Parbrahm or Sat Lok, beyond the sphere of birth and death, may rightly be called a phoenix. Further, a *hansa* is said to feed on pearls. Now, a person may appropriately be termed a *hansa* who gives up worldly desires and sensual pleasures and has through spiritual transport learned to lead the life of the spirit and live on the pearls of Shabd.

Likewise, when mystics compare the Guru to the *paaras* (पारस), the philosopher's stone, we should not be misled and think that they are advocating the doctrine of alchemy or proving the existence of such a magic stone in this world. As a Guru transports our soul to ethereal realms of absolute transcendence and transforms human beings into immortal beings, he may justly be named *paaras*, the philosopher's stone, which turns base metals into gold. As humans in the physical world we are base metals, but the Guru turns us into the gold of divine beings. Thus a Guru is the true *paaras*, but this does not prove that in the physical world we do actually have some stone of such wonderful properties.

Mystics talk to us in the language of this world and in terms of worldly things only because they have to explain their inner spiritual experiences to men of this world. They speak to us through the ideas with which we are conversant already; regardless of whether such ideas are in themselves true or false.

4 The mind needs training

To find God, we have to train our mind in the company of mystics and by doing the mystic practice. If we can control our mind, our

body can do nothing against our will. On the other hand, we may torture the body, and still fail to conquer the mind.

ਵਰਮੀ ਮਾਰੀ ਸਾਪੁ ਨ ਮੁਆ ॥

O beatest thou the hole, but killest not the snake.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1348

Our mind, *man* (मन) or *nafs* (نفس), is a snake that lives in this body. We go on tormenting this physical frame and still do not succeed in curbing the mind. But it is the mind that is to be disciplined. Even if we crush our body, the mind may still rebel against us, but once the mind is subdued, the body shall come under our control as a matter of course.

If there is an enemy of ours, we should conquer and overcome him and make him our ally. Depriving him of his weapons may not be of much use, for he can obtain new ones. If our enemy has, for instance, a sword with him, and we merely snatch away his sword, we are not out of danger, for he may come again with a revolver. But if we bring him under our control and make friends with him, then though he may have any number of weapons, he will not be dangerous.

मनहीं को परमोधिये, मनहीं को उपदेस ।

जो यहि मन को बसि करै, (तो) सिष्य होय सब देस ॥

Reform thou thy mind,
And preach thou to thine own mind.
If this mind cometh under thy control,
Then shall the whole world follow thee.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P.147:20

گر تو مردی نفس کا فراموش

If thou art a man, curb thou thy rebellious mind.

BU ALI QALANDAR, *MASNAVI BU ALI QALANDAR*, P.18

ਮਮਾ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਕਾਜੁ ਹੈ ਮਨ ਸਾਧੇ ਸਿਧਿ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਕਹੈ ਕਬੀਰਾ ਮਨ ਸਾ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

With thine own mind hast thou to deal,
And by training thy mind becomest thou
A *siddha*, a perfected being.
O fight thou with thine own mind, saith Kabir
For like this is no other enemy.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.342

But we do not have to suspend external activity; we only have to stop the mind from going into the things of this world.

ਨਾਮਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿਆ ਕਹੈ ਤਿਲੋਚਨੁ ਮੀਤ ॥
ਕਾਹ ਛੀਪਹੁ ਛਾਇਲੈ ਰਾਮ ਨ ਲਾਵਹੁ ਚੀਤੁ ॥

By maya art thou ensnared, O Namdev.
Why dost thou, O friend, thatch roofs,
And not give thy devotion to God, saith Trilochan.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1375

Namdev and Trilochan were two mystics. The latter asked the former why he wasted his time in doing the work of thatching instead of devoting himself to God. To this Namdev answered:

ਨਾਮਾ ਕਹੈ ਤਿਲੋਚਨਾ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਰਾਮੁ ਸੰਮਾਲਿ ॥
ਹਾਥ ਪਾਉ ਕਰਿ ਕਾਮ ਸਭੁ ਚੀਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

With thy tongue do thou
Take the name of God, O Trilochan;

Engage thy hands and feet in work,
But give thou thy mind to God, saith Namdev.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1375-76

a. Slander

Slandering others is really bad; we should talk ill of no one.

ਨਿੰਦਾ ਭਲੀ ਕਿਸੈ ਕੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਮੁਗਧ ਕਰੰਨਿ ॥
ਮੁਹ ਕਾਲੇ ਤਿਨ ਨਿੰਦਕਾ ਨਰਕੇ ਘੋਰਿ ਪਵੰਨਿ ॥

Oh, no one do thou slander, for 'tis not good;
Only the worldly minded foolish fellow indulgeth in it.
Blackened is the face of the slanderer,
And into the bottomless pits of hell is he hurled.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.755

And in no case should we slander the Masters. On the face of the earth, they are the highest beings, and in their essence are one with God. Therefore slandering them is abusing God himself.

ਸੰਤਾ ਕਉ ਮਤਿ ਕੋਈ ਨਿੰਦਹੁ ਸੰਤ ਰਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਏਕੋ ॥

Let no one slander the true Master,
For he and God are one.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.793

ਜੋ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਕਰੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀ ਸੋ ਸਾਚੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਪਚਾਇਆ ॥
ਏਹੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਤਿਨਿ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਗਤੁ ਸਭੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥

Who slandereth the true Guru,
By the true Lord is he damned;
And by him hath this Word been uttered
Who the whole universe hath created.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.306

The man who slanders others picks up their filth gratis. If we slander others, we take all their sins on our own head; we clean their houses free of charge, so to speak.

ਨਿੰਦਕੁ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਕਰਿ ਮਲ ਧੋਵੈ ਓਹੁ ਮਲਭਖੁ ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ॥
ਸੰਤ ਜਨਾ ਕੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਵਿਆਪੇ ਨਾ ਉਰਵਾਰਿ ਨ ਪਾਰੀ ॥

By slandering others doth the fault-finder
Wash their dirt;
Drowned in worldliness, eateth he filth,
And indulgeth he in slandering the true Guru;
But alas! Loseth he both, this world and the next.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.507

None should we revile, none should we slander. When God is the ultimate source of all, whom can we call bad?

ਨਿੰਦਉ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਾਹੂ ਬਾਝੈ ਏਹੁ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ॥
ਜਾ ਕਉ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਮੇਰੈ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਨਾਉ ਲੀਆ ॥

On no account do thou slander,
For 'tis all God's doing.
On whomsoever is my Lord merciful,
Through mystics' company obtaineth he Nam.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.611

We praise one man and censure another, for we are ignorant. We see variety and multiplicity, we live in the delusion and darkness of phenomena. In absolute reality all is good, for all is his.

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥
ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹੁ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਾਸਾਈ ॥

Since I found the company of mystics,
 All ill will against others hath left me.
 Nor is anyone my enemy, nor stranger;
 Good will have I for all.
 Whatever the Lord doeth, that I take as sweet;
 This wisdom have I learnt from the mystics.
 In all pervadeth the same Lord,
 And by beholding him is Nanak in bliss.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1299

b. Humility

If we want to imbibe the good qualities of others, we should be humble.

ਦਾਸਨਿ ਦਾਸ ਦਾਸ ਹੋਇ ਰਹੀਐ ਜੋ ਜਨ ਰਾਮ ਭਗਤ ਨਿਜ ਭਈਆ ॥
 ਮਨੁ ਬੁਧਿ ਅਰਪਿ ਧਰਉ ਗੁਰ ਆਗੈ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਮੈ ਅਕਥੁ ਕਥਈਆ ॥

O, be thou the slave of the slaves of the mystic
 Who hath deep devotion to God;
 O, place thou thy mind and intellect before thy Guru,
 For by Guru's grace have I uttered the Unutterable.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.834

He that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

BIBLE, LUKE 9:48

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

BIBLE, JAMES 4:6

زاهد غرور داشت سلامت نبرد راه رند از رو نیاز بدار سلامت رفت

From pride suffered the pious man,
 And (so) he travelled not safely on the way;

But through his mercy did the intoxicated lover
Reach his destination without trouble.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.86, 93:7

Pride hath a fall, but the humble ever live in safety and obtain
spiritual wealth from the mystic adept.

ਚਰਣ ਪਖਾਰਿ ਕਰਉ ਗੁਰ ਸੇਵਾ ਆਤਮ ਸੁਖੁ ਬਿਖੁ ਤਿਆਸ ਨਿਵਾਰੀ ॥
ਦਾਸਨ ਕੀ ਹੋਈ ਦਾਸਿ ਦਾਸਰੀ ਤਾ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਸੋਭਾ ਹਰਿ ਦੁਆਰੀ ॥

Serve the Guru, and fall thou at his feet;
Thus shall thy soul be purified,
And the fire of passions be extinguished.
Be thou the slave of his slaves;
Then in the durbar of the Lord shalt thou be honoured.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.377

But this does not imply that we should lower ourselves before everybody or cringe before worldly people for material gain. For performing our duties in this life properly, we have to maintain some sort of dignity. True humility pertains to one's inner self; it is an attitude of the mind. If we are humble in heart, we need not make a parade of it before people.

Once a snake lived on the roadside and bit all who passed that way. By chance a mystic came there, and through his elevating influence, the serpent felt a desire to be good and sought his advice. Telling him not to bite people in the future, the mystic went his way. After some time he returned and saw that the serpent was wounded at several places on his body and had become a plaything for mischievous boys. In great amazement and pity, he asked the serpent what had brought him to such a miserable condition. "It was your advice to bite none," said he. "Certainly bite thou none," replied the mystic, "but do not give up thy hissing."

Outwardly we should not give up our hissing, but at heart be humble and kind to all.

ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ॥
ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਵੇਸੋ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੈ ਕੰਤੁ ॥

What is that learning, what is that virtue,
What is that jewel of jewels,
What sort of dress am I to wear,
By which I may win my Lord?

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1384

What are those qualities which befit us for mystic transport,
and take us nearer God?

ਨਿਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਖਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ॥
ਏ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਭੈਣੇ ਵੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਤਾ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੈ ਕੰਤੁ ॥

Humility is that learning, meekness is that virtue,
And sweet talk is the jewel of jewels;
The dress of these three do thou put on, O sister,
And then shalt thou win thy Lord.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1384

(1) *Benevolence*: We should try to be useful to all, even to those who do us harm:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬੁਰੇ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ਕਰਿ ਗੁਸਾ ਮਨਿ ਨ ਹਢਾਇ ॥
ਦੇਹੀ ਰੋਗੁ ਨ ਲਗਾਈ ਪਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇ ॥

Do thou good even to the evil doer, O Farid,
And harbour no ill will in the mind.

Then shall no disease touch thee,
And then shalt thou get all (thou desirest).

FARID, ADI GRANTH, P.1381-82

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜੋ ਤੈ ਮਾਰਨਿ ਮੁਕੀਆਂ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਨ ਮਾਰੇ ਘੁੰਮਿ॥
ਆਪਨੜੈ ਘਰਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਪੈਰ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਦੇ ਚੁੰਮਿ॥

If people give thee fist blows, O Farid,
Do not thou beat them in return.
Rather kiss their feet,
And take thou thy way home.

FARID, ADI GRANTH, P.1378

Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right
cheek, turn to him the other also.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 5:39

We should not have the spirit of revenge and retaliation in us, but the spirit of forgiveness; we should cherish goodwill and love for all, even for the wicked and the fallen. This is high and subtle philosophy and might sound rather quaint in this world of keen competition. Here we find that struggle for existence is the principle of life, but the principle of the higher life of the spirit is toleration and love, humility and benevolence.

(2) *Keeping mystic power hidden, jarna (ਜਰਨਾ) or zabt (ضبط)*: If we are vain and hollow we cannot contain the secret of God; only a quiet heart can hold the treasure of the transcendent Word.

گوش آں کس نوشدا سر ارجلال کُو چوسون صد زباں افتادلال

The secret of the Radiant Lord
Is drunk in only by the ear of the one
Who like the lily with a hundred tongues
Keepeth absolutely silent.

RUMI, *MASNAVI* III:21

To know divine secrets, and keep them within oneself, to have all power and still be humble, to possess the jewel of Nam and pass for a common lay person, to be one with the Most High and live like an ordinary mortal – this is indeed a great thing. This depth is found only in the heart of the perfect mystic.

ਮਤਿ ਹੋਦੀ ਹੋਇ ਇਆਣਾ ॥ ਤਾਣ ਹੋਦੇ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਤਾਣਾ ॥

With all power, liveth he low,
With all honour, keepeth he humble.

FARID, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1384

In the world, when someone wins a large amount of money in a lottery or is exceptionally fortunate in other ways, he cannot confine his pleasure within his own bosom; he cannot contain himself; he turns half mad with joy. Cases are known where people have died of intense joy. Similarly it is no joke to absorb within oneself the intensity of divine bliss. It is only the transcendent power of mysticism that can hold the transcendent secrets of God; it is only the spiritual profoundness of transport that can contain the spiritual truths of reality. Divine knowledge should be concealed from the common eye; spiritual treasures should not be opened to the undeserving.

Again and again do I tell thee, O Dharamdas;
Let not the divine secret go out.

KABIR, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Neither cast ye your pearls before swine.

BIBLE, *MATTHEW* 7:6

5 Spiritual influence of mystics

Mystics are the highest personalities, grandest and most sublime. A Guru is the greatest of all. Our imagination ever fails to comprehend his inner greatness.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਨਿਤ ਚੜੈ ਸਵਾਈ ਅਪੜਿ ਕੋ ਨ ਸਕੋਈ ॥

Ever rising is thy praise, O Guru;
And none can reach thy transcendent being.

GURU RAM DAS, *ADI GRANTH*, P.309

In the subtle planes of transcendent worlds, the Guru stands a colossal figure, most powerful above all beings and creatures, angels and gods. He is a huge, gigantic personality, who commands both heaven and earth, and holds the thread of life in his grip.

چوسنگ پاره چو بنید لال پاره کند
مسلم اہل نظر راست در نظر تاثیر

Like the elixir, the mystic by his glance
Turneth a stone into a ruby;
'Tis an established fact –
Such is the divine effect of his gaze.

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

Guru is the true elixir, for he infuses into us the divine life of the soul, and instils into our being the supreme essence of spirituality. He shows us hidden treasures of transcendent truths, and unveils to our view the secret mines of divine inspiration.

ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ਕਾ ਏਕੋ ਠਾਣਾ ਗੁਰਿ ਪਰਦਾ ਖੋਲਿ ਦਿਖਾਇਓ ॥

Of all planes and universes there is but one Source,
And by lifting the veil hath my Guru shown it to me.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.205

Devoted to his Guru, the mystic cares not for heaven or hell,
for salvation or bondage.

ਕਵਨੁ ਨਰਕੁ ਕਿਆ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ ਸੇਤਨ ਦੋਊ ਰਾਦੇ ॥
ਹਮ ਕਾਹੂ ਕੀ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕਢਤੇ ਅਪਨੇ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੇ ॥

What is hell, and what is poor heaven?
The perfect mystic rejecteth both,
For from all bondage by the grace of his Guru
Hath he been freed.

KABIR, ADI GRANTH, P.969

The spiritual influence of the mystic adept is very great; like a bouquet of rose flowers, wherever he goes, his benign influence spreads all around him. Whoever comes in contact with him is benefited. If a perfect mystic rides a horse, then, as stated by adepts, that horse after death at once becomes a man. If that mystic eats the fruit of a tree, that tree in the next life obtains a human body. If an insect comes under his feet, then after death it comes directly into a human frame.

Now in the ordinary course, the soul of a tree must pass through various lives as insects, and then as birds, and then as quadrupeds before it can obtain a human body. Similarly an insect has to pass through all the stages of birds and quadrupeds before it becomes a human being. All creatures have to pass through the intermediary stages before coming to the life of a human being. But due to the influence of perfect mystics, exceptions are created

in this general rule. In his book *Ratnasagar* (रतन सागर), the great mystic Tulsi Sahib says:

संत चरन अति बहुत बड़, जो जिव चरन खुँदाय ।
नर जामा पावे वही, संत चरन परभाव ॥

Gracious indeed are the feet of saints.
If under those feet an insect is killed,
Then due to their influence
At once getteth it the human garb.

TULSI SAHIB, *RATNASAGAR*, P.41

मरत जीव जो चरन से, सहज चलत के माहिं ।
जो खुँदाय कुँच के मरे, छूवत नर तन पाय ॥

Whatever insect is killed by coming under the feet
(Of the perfect mystic)
In the course of his ordinary walking,
That insect which is crushed to death by this touch
Getteth the body of man.

TULSI SAHIB, *RATNASAGAR*, P.45

It is said, if a man once beholds a perfect mystic intensely and with reverence, then after death he will not go to any lower kind of life, but be born again as a man. If one becomes the disciple of a true mystic adept and is accepted by him, then he cannot go to hell or lower lives.

बुरा भला जो गुर-भगत, कबहूँ नरक न जाय ॥

Good or bad, the Guru's devotee never goeth to hell.

TULSI SAHIB, *SANTBANI SANGRAH*, VOL.1, P.214

Nor has he to give any account before the judgement seat.

تراہروز حساب این امر شود معلوم کہ بود سلطنت بے حساب درویشی

This shalt thou know on Judgement Day,
That the kingdom of mystics
Have to render no account.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

ਚਿਤ੍ਰ ਗੁਪਤ ਕਾ ਕਾਗਦੁ ਫਾਰਿਆ ਜਮਦੂਤਾ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਚਲੀ ॥

Teareth he the paper of Chitragnpta
(The account of judgement day);
And helpless is the Angel of Death before him.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.79

a. *Law of karma* (ਕਰਮ)

(1) *Transmigration* (ਚੌਰਾਸੀ): As mystics of the highest order state, there are in all eighty-four lakh kinds of life in this universe. Now according to our actions we go on moving from one kind of existence to another, and then to still another, and so on in this cycle of transmigration. We have been revolving in this circle since the beginning of creation.

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਭਏ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਜ ਮੀਨ ਕੁਰੰਗਾ ॥
ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਪੰਥੀ ਸਰਪ ਹੋਇਓ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਹੈਵਰ ਬ੍ਰਿਖ ਜੋਇਓ ॥
ਮਿਲੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ ਮਿਲਨ ਕੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥ ਚਿਰਕਾਲ ਇਹ ਦੇਹ ਸੰਜਰੀਆ ॥

Many lives hast thou passed as insects and moths,
Many as elephants, fish and deer,
For many lives wert thou bird and serpent,
And for many, horse and tree.

O seek God now, this is the time of union (with him);
For after a long time hast thou got this body.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.176

بچو سبزہ بار بار روئیدہ ام ہفت دو ہفتاد قالب دیدہ ام

Many a time like verdure have I sprung,
And many are the forms of life I have seen.

RUMI, KULLIYAT-I SHAMS-I TABRIZ, P.548

از جمادی مردم و نای شدم از نما مردم بخو اں بر زدم
ہم چنیں تا صد ہزار اں ہست ہا بعد یک دیگر دوم بہ ز ابتدا

I died from mineral and a plant became,
Died from the plant and took a sentient frame....
Like this passed I through
Hundreds of thousands of lives,
And each was better than the previous one.

RUMI, MASNAVI III:3901, V:792

After going through the cycle of eighty-four lakh lives, we have reached the top and obtained the human body. Now we should go further up into spiritual, transcendent planes, and realize our identity with God. Why, then, are we so strongly attached to this life?

در فنا ہا ایں بقا ہا دیدہ بر بقای جسم چوں چسبیدہ

In all thy destructions hast thou seen new lives;
Then why art thou to the life of the body
Stuck fast like a leech?

RUMI, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

(2) *Why meat is forbidden*: Perfect mystics tell us that we should not take meat, for it is a sin to kill life. But Sir J. C. Bose has now proved that even plants have life. In fact mystics had stated this truth long ago.

ਜੇਤੇ ਦਾਣੇ ਅੰਨ ਕੇ ਜੀਆ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

In all the grains of food, without life is not a single one.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.472

Thus, even when we are pure vegetarians, we still destroy life and commit this sin. However, as mystics point out, life of various kinds does not have the same value, because there are different stages of development or evolution. The sin of killing a horse or a dog is not as great as that of killing a man. Similarly the sin of killing a bird is less than that of killing a quadruped. The sin of killing an insect is still less, and that of cutting a plant is the least.

The whole creation is divided into five classes according to the predominance of the number of elements or *tattwas* (तत्त्व) in each. In human beings all the five elements, earth (मिट्टी), fire (आग), water (पानी), air (हवा) and ether (आकाश) are equally predominant; in quadrupeds, only four are predominant, for ether (आकाश) is missing. In birds, only three *tattwas* (तत्त्व) are found in prominence: fire, water and air. In insects only two are found – insects which crawl, such as ants, have earth and fire; insects which fly, such as moths, have air and fire as the active elements. In vegetables only one is found, water. In some plants as much as ninety to ninety-five per cent is water.

The sin of destroying life is proportionate to the stage of development that it has reached, or the number of *tattwas* that it possesses. In this way by eating vegetables, although we destroy life, we destroy the lowest kind of life and thus commit the smallest amount of sin, if we may put it so. No doubt the difference between taking meat and eating only vegetables is ultimately a difference

of degree and not of kind, yet the degree of difference may be so enormous as to make it almost as good as difference of kind.

If the sin of cutting a cabbage be represented by one unit, then the sin of killing an insect may be, say 10 units, of killing a bird 100 units and a quadruped 1,000 units. Now obviously it is better to commit only one unit of sin rather than 100 units or 1,000 units. In our upward journey in mysticism, if we must carry a burden, let us carry only a few grams rather than dozens of kilograms or maunds.

Moreover, the mind in vegetables is in a dull condition, so that its feeling, although there, is neither intense nor well differentiated. Now, the real sin lies in hurting the hearts or injuring the feelings of others. By eating vegetables we do a very inappreciable injury to the feelings of those plants; whereas by killing a hen or a goat, we inflict very severe and intense pain on the heart of that creature. Hence it is quite plain that for progress in our spiritual enlightenment, we should avoid meat.

b. Kinds of karma

Karma is of three kinds:

(1) *Kriyaman* (क्रीयमान): This is that action which a person performs by his free will. When it is left to him to determine what he will do, and what course of action he will adopt, when it is within his control to decide one way or another, then it is known as *kriyaman* karma. The person is himself responsible for it and the result of such actions becomes his fate in future lives.

(2) *Pralabdh* (प्रालब्ध): This is that karma which is allotted to a person in this life as a result of his actions in previous lives. It is his fate, so to speak, and beyond his control now.

इदं शरीरमुत्पाद्य इह लोके एवं सुखदुखादिप्रदं
यत् कर्म तत् प्रारब्धं भोगेन नष्टं भवति ॥

The karma that createth this body, in this world,
Giveth it pain and pleasure is pralabdh,
And by passing through it, it is destroyed.

HINDU SHASTRA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

The chief events of good luck and ill luck in our life are due to this kind of karma. It is just like a farmer who ploughs his field and sows some seed. When the seed grows up as a plant, he cannot change it. Before throwing the seed into the earth, it is left to him to decide what seed he will sow, but having done it, he must reap what he has sown. Kriyaman karma is like the sowing of the seed. It is in our control, but the result of such karma in a future life is the crop that we must reap; it is our fate.

The actions that we perform by our free will are now left to us and within our control. They are kriyaman. But their fruit which we receive in a future life is beyond our control, and is called pralabdh. Our kriyaman karma of previous lives has resulted in our present pralabdh or fate, and our present kriyaman actions will determine our fate or pralabdh in future lives. So it is quite true that we make our own fate.

(3) *Sinchit* (संचित): This is that karma of our previous lives which does not influence our present life but is kept in our account as a reserve store. It has been accumulating during innumerable lives of ours in the past and is now a big heap or pile. When we are given birth, a part of our karma of past lives is allotted to us for this life, and the remaining is added to this pile. So it is becoming bigger and bigger. Now, if a time comes when both our pralabdh and kriyaman karma is finished, even then we don't become *neh karmi* (निहकर्म), actionless, and go up into spiritual planes. Kal gives us a portion from this reserve store as our fate for the next life.

अनन्त कोटिजन्मना बीजभूतं सत यत्कर्मजातं पूर्वार्जितं
तिष्ठति तत्संचितम् ज्ञेयम् ॥

The karma of innumerable lives in the form of seeds which have been fixed by previous lives is known as *sinchit*.

HINDU SHASTRA, REFERENCE UNAVAILABLE

It is stated that this store of karma is so big that it is not possible to exhaust all karma and clear our account (with Kal) by undergoing it through any number of lives. It is a very heavy burden on us. It crushes us and does not let us go up into higher planes. And save through the grace of the mystic adept, it cannot be got rid of.

c. How mystics destroy karma

Now the mystic adept is so merciful that when he initiates a man into the secrets of transport and accepts him as his disciple, then by the power of his transcendent overwhelming spirituality and due to the glory of God manifest in him, he lifts away the great weight of the heap of karma which was pressing down the soul of his disciple. This is one of the greatest acts of benevolence that the Guru does for his followers. He is finally responsible for the destruction of all their *sinchit* karma as well. He makes his disciples *neh karmi* (निहकर्मी), actionless or beyond good and evil, and then takes them up into Sat Lok, our true home of abiding peace and bliss.

The first kind of karma, *kriyaman* (क्रीयमान), is set at naught, because the disciple is taught by his adept to perform actions without any desire for their reward or fruit. Moreover, Shabd destroys this karma by killing our desire. The second kind of karma, *pralabdh* (प्रालब्ध), is finished because it is all undergone during one's lifetime. The third kind of karma, *sinchit* (संचित), which is the most difficult to rid ourselves of, is destroyed when

by devotion to the Guru, the soul of the disciple in its inward spiritual ascent goes beyond the top of Trikuti, the region of Brahm or Om, and has a dip in Mansarovar or Amritsar there. There is no karma in that transcendent plane; it is beyond good and evil. The human form of the adept outside and his true essence as Shabd inside are competent to destroy all karma.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਕਿਆ ਕਹਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਸਤ ਸਰੁ ॥
ਓਹੁ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦੀ ਜੁਗਹ ਜੁਗੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ॥

How can I praise Guru,
The ocean of truth and discernment?
From eternity to eternity is he ever the perfect God.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.397

6 God's will supreme

Therefore, when God wants to show us his highest grace and mercy, he sends us a mystic adept. This is his greatest gift and rarest boon. He is the sole master and absolute Lord over all, his will is supreme, his word is ultimate, his decrees are final.

ਮਾਰੈ ਰਾਖੇ ਏਕੋ ਆਪਿ ॥ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਕੈ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਹਾਥਿ ॥

All is his destroying and preserving;
In man's hand is nothing.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.281

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸਿ ਹੈ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਾਚਿ ਸਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋ ਥੀਐ ਇਨਾ ਜੰਤਾ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

By his will falleth man into the bondage of Kal,
And by his will doth he merge in Truth.

He doth what he willeth, O Nanak;
Nothing is in the hands of these creatures.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.55

God is the real doer; human beings are merely instruments in his hands. This is a truth of absolute existence.

ਇਕਿ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਏ ਇਕਿ ਭਗਤੀ ਰਾਤੇ ਤੇਰਾ ਖੇਲੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥
ਜਿਤੁ ਤੁਧੁ ਲਾਏ ਤੇਰਾ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਤੂ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਵਣਹਾਰਾ ॥

Some thou leadest astray,
And some engagemst thou in devotion;
Mysterious indeed are thy doings, O Lord.
Man doth whatever thou settest him to;
Thou art the absolute Commander.

GURU NANAK, ADI GRANTH, P.635

Only those come to the mystic path of Shabd in whose lot it is already written by God.

ਧੁਰਿ ਕਰਮਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਜਿਨ ਕਉ ਸਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਲਾਗੇ ॥
ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਹ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਆ ਤਿਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਅਨਹਦ ਵਾਜੇ ॥

Whomsoever from above
Dost thou will to do so,
He alone findeth thy Name, O Lord;
In eternal bliss is he, O Nanak,
And in his house (body) ringeth the Anahad Shabd.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.917

ਕਿਸ ਨੋ ਕਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ॥

Whom shall we address, O Nanak, when he is all in all.

GURU ANGAD, ADI GRANTH, P.475

He is the whole reality, he is the total existence, he is the true being, and he is real essence. In him is life, in him is light; all that is, is in him and of him.

For in him we live, and move, and have our being.

BIBLE, ACTS 17:28

a. Resigning to his will

Therefore we should submit to his decrees with grateful resignation.

ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥

Whatever the Lord doeth, that I take as sweet;
This wisdom have I learnt from the mystics.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.1299

ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਂਗੈ ॥

Thy will is sweet, O Lord;
For thy Nam doth Nanak yearn.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.394

باقضائے آسمانی چاره جز تسلیم نیست در محیط بکراں ز نهار دست و پا مزن

Thou canst not help submitting
To the decrees of heaven;
So in this abysmal ocean struggle not
Thou with thy hands and feet.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

O my Father...thy will be done.

BIBLE, MATTHEW 26:42

We cannot evade his orders, we cannot avert his commands.
Our struggling against heaven's decrees is futile and barren; it is
not productive. Therefore we should try to understand his will
and be content with our lot.

ਨਿਰਗੁਣੁ ਮੁਗਧੁ ਅਜਾਣੁ ਅਗਿਆਨੀ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣਾ ॥
ਦਇਆ ਕਰਹੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵੈ ਮਿਠਾ ਲਗੈ ਤੇਰਾ ਭਾਣਾ ॥

Worthless, foolish, ignorant, and blind is he;
And knoweth he neither morality nor religion.
Be thou merciful, O Lord,
So that thy praises Nanak may sing,
And thy will he may take as sweet.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.748

رضا بداده بدو ز جبین گره بکشا که بر من و تو در اختیار کنشادست

Oh, be thou content with thy lot,
And untie thou the knots of frowns on thy forehead;
For to thee or me the door
Of option hath not been opened.

HAFIZ, *DIVAN-I HAFIZ*, P.89, 32:9

b. The question of resignation and prayer

Contentment and resignation are great qualities, but in this
world several religions look upon prayer as the greatest thing.
Whenever we are in trouble, they say we should pray to our Heav-
enly Father to relieve us of that trouble. If we are in want of some-
thing, it is natural for us to ask our Lord in heaven for it. We should
not beg from human beings, we should pray to God alone.

Cease from man and look above thee,
Trust in God and do the right.

NORMAN MCCLEOD, FROM THE HYMN "COURAGE, BROTHER"

In the world when a child is in need of something, he naturally and rightfully asks his father to give him the thing. Now God is our Heavenly Father; we are all his children. Therefore, whenever we want his help, we should pray to him and, as he is our loving Father, he will, so far as possible, grant our request and take us out of trouble and difficulty.

This view is not unreasonable; this attitude is not wrong. Prayer is indeed very good and useful; it is a power that is beneficial for all people. But the great Shabd mystics see prayer from a different perspective. They do not recommend praying to God to give us advantages or remove troubles, because this kind of prayer is not consistent with their transcendent love.

In the first place, praying for changes in our situation implies some lack or imperfection in God. We can pray to God only if he is not doing the right thing already. God does one thing and we pray to him to do something else. This means that God does not do the best thing of himself; he stands in need of reminders from us, so to speak. This implies that in his doings there is scope for improvement. But if God is perfect, then his doings are also perfect, and there is no scope for any prayer. Without our asking, he does what is best, and we need not pray to him to give us this thing and that thing, because he is already giving what is good for us. We should only try to realize that what he does is really the best. The mystic view is embodied in the saying:

I do not choose the best, but the best chooses me.

Whatever our Lord does is indeed the best and there is absolutely no room for prayer or desire of any sort, but we do not know it; we have no knowledge and no faith. Our praying thus shows our lack of faith in God's perfection and his goodness.

Further, if we have love for God, if he is our beloved Lord, then his will should be sweet to us. In love there is no scope for

desire. The desire of the beloved is also the desire of the lover. If we say we love God, we should not put forward our desires; we should be glad and contented with his decrees. The lover loses his desires in the will of the beloved, and when no desire is left, no prayer is possible.

Now, love is the life of mystics; it is their religion. They want nothing save devotion and love to their Lord. In such intense love, prayer or desire has no place. From his Lord, the mystic lover wants the beloved Lord himself and nothing else. Things of the world being delusive and ephemeral, we should ask from God nothing but God himself.

ਵਿਣੁ ਤੁਧੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਜਿ ਮੰਗਣਾ ਸਿਰਿ ਦੁਖਾ ਕੈ ਦੁਖ ॥
ਦੇਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੀਆ ਉਤਰੈ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਭੁਖ ॥

Asking from thee anything save thyself
Is indeed the misery of all miseries;
Give me Nam the appeaser, O Lord,
So that all hunger of my mind may be removed.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.958

زہرا اہل دل جز دولت عقیقی نخواہ! زہنہارا از ترک دنیا کردگاں دنیا نخواہ

From the market of mystics,
Save spiritual treasure nothing do thou ask;
From the renouncers of the world;
O beg not anything of this world.

SOURCE UNKNOWN

Thus resigning to his will is better and higher than praying.

بمنت وگراں خوکن کہ درد و جہاں رضاے ایزد و انعام بادشاہت بس

O desire not thou to beg favours from others,
For in both the worlds his will is the true kingdom.

HAFIZ, *DIWAN-I HAFIZ*, P.248

c. Realizing his will

We should try to realize his will, so that we may be satisfied and contented so that, by knowing the profound reality of life, we may be happy and in bliss; so that, by coming in contact with the source of spiritual light, we may bathe in the glory of divine love and be one with that ocean of transcendent beatitude.

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੂਝਤਾ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਲਉ ਦੁਖੀਆ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਖੀਆ ॥

As long as his will thou dost not know,
So long art thou in pain;
When through Guru's grace realizest thou his will
Then shalt thou be truly happy.

GURU ARJUN, *ADI GRANTH*, P.400

Once we realize his will, we shall attain true bliss and beatitude. His will is his Word, which we call Shabd. If once by mystic transport we come to know his will or Word, we shall go beyond delusion and egoism now and forever.

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੂਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

All is within his will,
And without his will is nothing,
If his will wert thou to know, O Nanak,
Then thy egoism wouldst thou give up.

GURU NANAK, *ADI GRANTH*, P.1

7 Finishing

a. Four cycles of time (चार युग)

According to the Shastras (Hindu scriptures) and mystics, there are four cycles of time that follow one another in the same order again and again. They are known as the four yugas and each has some features of its own.

(1) *Satyug (सत्त युग)*: This is the age of truth (सत्त). During this period, people are truthful in all their doings. They speak the truth and deal truthfully with others. Truth is the predominant quality in their religious observances; it is through truth that they try to obtain salvation. It is stated that in this yuga a person's lifetime is 100,000 years and his strength equal to that of 1,000 elephants. This is considered to be the best yuga, the Golden Age.

(2) *Tretayug (त्रेता युग)*: This is the age of austerities, *tap* (तप). During this period people try to obtain salvation through austerities. In this yuga a person's lifetime is reduced to 10,000 years and his strength to that of 100 elephants. This is considered to be the second best yuga, the Silver Age, and its duration is shorter than that of Satyug.

(3) *Dwaparyug (द्वापर युग)*: This is the age of worship (पूजा), external (राजसी) and mental (मानसी). During this period people try to obtain salvation through worship of idols, gods and goddesses. In this yuga, a person's lifetime is further reduced to 1,000 years and his strength to that of 10 elephants. This is considered to be the third best yuga, the Brass Age, and its duration is less than that of Tretayug.

(4) *Kaliyug (कलियुग)*: This is the current age. During this period, salvation can be had only through devotion to the mystic

adept and the practice of Shabd Yoga. In this yuga a person's life-time is still further reduced to a hundred years and his strength to that of one elephant, but today it is much less even than that. This is considered to be the worst of all yugas, the Iron Age, because people have evil tendencies. Selfishness and deceit sways the minds of men and lead them to cherish low ideas and do bad deeds. And its duration is less than that of Dwaparyug.

b. How Kaliyug is the best

In a way Kaliyug is the best of all, because mystic adepts of the highest stage (who appear in the world in other yugas also) come in this yuga in large number and are extremely merciful. Even with a little devotion on the part of their disciples, they open spiritual treasures to them. What in other yugas is hard to achieve by centuries of hard practices may, through devotion to Guru and Shabd (or Nam), be attained in days in this yuga.

ਸਤਜੁਗਿ ਸਤੁ ਤੇਤਾ ਜਗੀ ਦੁਆਪਰਿ ਪੂਜਾਚਾਰ ॥
ਤੀਨੋ ਜੁਗ ਤੀਨੋ ਦਿੜੇ ਕਲਿ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ਅਧਾਰ ॥

In Satyug truth, in Treta austerity,
In Dwapar worship and religious ceremonies;
In three yugas, firmly were these three followed;
(But) in Kaliyug, Nam alone sustaineth.

RAVIDAS, ADI GRANTH, P.346

Other methods may have produced some results in other yugas, but now Shabd practice and devotion to Guru alone are effective. And unlike others, this path leads us to the highest spiritual stage. If we are so fortunate as to find a perfect mystic adept, this yuga is indeed the best for us, but if we are without a Guru, it is really the worst.

c. Mysticism – our foremost concern

Shabd or Nam is the real thing, all else is sham; Nam is intrinsic gold, all else is tinsel.

ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਭਿ ਕੁਝ ਗਾਲੀ ਹੋਛੀਆ ॥

Save Nam is all else false and worthless.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.761

Nam is reality, all else is delusion. Without Shabd all the enjoyments of the world are filth; without Nam even supernatural powers are worthless.

ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਪੈਨਣੁ ਖਾਣੁ ਸਭੁ ਬਾਦਿ ਹੈ ਧਿਗੁ ਸਿਧੀ ਧਿਗੁ ਕਰਮਾਤਿ ॥
ਸਾ ਸਿਧਿ ਸਾ ਕਰਮਾਤਿ ਹੈ ਅਚਿੰਤੁ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਦਾਤਿ ॥

Without Nam all eating and drinking is rubbish;
All miracles and supernatural powers are accursed;
That is the true miracle,
When the absolute Lord giveth his gift.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.650

Salvation can be had only through Shabd; this is a fundamental truth of all time. The treasure of Nam is lasting and stable; all other riches are ephemeral and evanescent.

ਏਕੋ ਨਿਹਚਲ ਨਾਮ ਧਨੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਧਨੁ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਇਸੁ ਧਨੁ ਕਉ ਤਸਕਰੁ ਜੋਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਈ ਨਾ ਓਚਕਾ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਇਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਜੀਐ ਸੇਤੀ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਜੀਐ ਨਾਲੇ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਪਲੈ ਨ ਪਾਇ ॥

Nam alone is stable wealth;
All other wealth cometh and goeth.

This wealth cannot be stolen by the thief,
 Nor taken away by the robber.
 The Perfect Guru giveth it,
 But the worldly minded fellow getteth it not.
 This wealth of God abideth with men,
 And with them doth it go.

GURU AMAR DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.511

Thus, although Shabd is the real thing, we cannot access it by ourselves. It can be accessed only from the living mystic adept; it is in his hands. And if we do not practise Shabd, all our other activities are useless, for they are in delusion.

ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਤੇਰੈ ਕਿਤੇ ਨ ਕਾਮ॥
 ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਭਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ॥

Other actions of thine avail thee not;
 O seek thou the company of mystics
 And practise thou only Nam.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.12

Once a man served a *faqueer* (a mystic) so well that, being pleased with him, the *faqueer* gave him a philosopher's stone on the condition that he could use it for as long as six months, but must return it after that. Then the *faqueer* went away and that man, as he had heard that the touch of that magic stone turned iron into gold, went to the market to buy iron. But on learning that the price of iron had gone up, he came back to wait till it would fall. After a month, he went to the bazaar again, but was told that iron had become dearer still. So he did not buy it, but came back empty handed. He wanted to make a good bargain, but as ill luck would have it, every time he went, he found the rate had gone higher. Foolish fellow! He cared for that petty little loss but did

not consider that one touch of the philosopher's stone with iron would make him rich beyond all measures. When at last the six months were over, the *fajeer* came and took back the magic stone and the man was left as poor as ever.

This is only an allegory. The real philosopher's stone is the mystic adept, but due to our ignorance and negligence, we do not avail ourselves of his divine presence among us. Our days in this world are numbered. Shall we go away from here utterly blank of spiritual treasures? Shall we not learn wisdom from this story and instead of spending all our time and energy in worldly pursuits, give our devotion to the mystic adept? Shall we miss witnessing the marvel of this true philosopher's stone?

d. My last word

May God enable us to recognize the living contemporary Satguru! May he give us the heart to lay our all at his holy feet! May we engage ourselves in service to him, so that it may purify our heart and open our inner eye.

ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਮਾਰੈ ਪੁਰੈ ਕਰਮਿ ਕਮਾਵਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਦੀ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਨ ਦੇਖਣੁ ਪਾਵਾ ॥

Out of thine infinite bounty,
Give me thou, O God, the service of thy servants;
This is Nanak's prayer, O Lord,
That thy mystics may I ever behold.

GURU ARJUN, ADI GRANTH, P.802

ऋद्धि सिद्धि माँगों नहीं, माँगों तुम पै येह ।
निसु दिन दरसन साध का, कह कबीर मोहिं देय ॥

For supernatural powers or miracles I ask not;
Only this much do I beg of thee, O Lord,

That day and night the sight of mystics
Do thou give me, saith Kabir.

KABIR, KABIR SAKHI SANGRAH, P.49:6

Only for the sight of the divine face of my mystic adept am I hungry, only for the nectar of his sweet words am I thirsty. O my Master, I am lying at thy door; weak as I am, I seek thy shelter; bad as I am, I have fallen at thy holy feet. I am the least of all, my Satguru, the lowest, the worst. I have nothing good in me; on thy mercy alone do I entirely depend. I know I am not worthy of thee, my Lord, but I am thine.

ਹਮਰੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਪਾਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਹਮ ਵੇਚਿਉ ਸਿਰੁ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ॥
ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਰਿਓ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ਗੁਰ ਰਾਖਹੁ ਲਾਜ ਜਨ ਕੇ ॥

Thou art my caste, O Guru,
And thou art my creed;
To thee have I sold my head.
Nanak is called thy disciple, O Guru;
Save him now, O Lord.

GURU RAM DAS, ADI GRANTH, P.731

Glossary

Adi Granth Primal (*aadi*) book or scripture (*granth*); also called the Granth Sahib; the name given to the scripture that brings together the poetry of the first five Gurus and the ninth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak, as well as numerous saints from various parts of India and present-day Pakistan. It is a mosaic of esoteric poetry by saints from various religious, cultural, vocational and geographic backgrounds whose teachings emphasize the oneness of God, the path of the Word, the equality of all people and the pursuit of truth. The Adi Granth was compiled by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, and completed in 1604. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, were added by Guru Gobind Singh. The followers of the teachings of the Gurus have adopted the Adi Granth as their most sacred scripture.

Agam Inaccessible, unfathomable. Agam refers to **Agam Lok** or **Agam Desh**, the third stage of Sat Lok (the highest realm or region of pure spirit); also refers to **Agam Purush**, the Lord of that stage. *See also* Sat Lok.

Alakh Literally, beyond perception. Alakh refers to **Alakh Lok**, the invisible realm, the second stage of Sat Lok (the realm or region of pure spirit); Alakh also refers to **Alakh Purush**, the Lord of that stage. *See also* Sat Lok.

Alam-i Lahoot Literally, world (*alam*) of divinity (*lahut*); world of the Godhead. In some usages, it refers to the second region (Trikuti) and in others, it refers to the third region (Parbrahm).

- anahad or anaahat** Without (*an*) limit (*bad*); not (*an*) struck (*aahat*); *anahad* and *anaahat* are two variant spellings and both can be translated as limitless or unstruck, as there are two possible derivations for this term. It commonly refers to the unstruck and unceasing Shabd, but also can refer to the heart chakra.
- Anahad Shabd** Limitless or unstruck Sound, with which conscious contact can be made within the human body. Can refer particularly to the sound of Brahm, the second spiritual region. *See also* Name *and* Shabd.
- Anami** Literally, nameless, without a name; used to refer to the Supreme Lord, as no name is adequate to describe him. Also called **Anami Purush**, Swami and Radha Soami; also refers to **Anami Desh** or **Anami Lok**, the final inner stage of Sat Lok. *See also* Sat Lok.
- And** The astral world, the second plane of existence. The reflection of Brahmand falls in And, and the planes of And are reflected in Pind. *See also* planes.
- angel of death** *See* Yama.
- Arjuna** Arjuna is the mythical warrior and hero of the Mahabharata Wars. Faced with the dilemma of the death of friends and relatives in the war, he turns to Krishna, his charioteer, for guidance. The ensuing dialogue uses the war as a metaphor for life and forms the basis of the Bhagavad Gita, the sixth book of the epic Mahabharata. In his response to Arjuna, Krishna expounds on living an ethical life, detached from the senses and from the attachments of the fruits of action, as the way to live in this world while discharging all responsibilities. He indicates that the path of bhakti yoga, of love, devotion and surrender to God is the way to reach him.
- astral plane** Refers to the first inner region, Sahansdal Kamal, the plane or realm immediately beyond the physical plane; also called And. During the soul's journey from the physical through the astral and higher planes, its coverings become finer and finer until they are finally eliminated. *See also* planes *and* Sahansdal Kamal.
- Bani** Sound, voice, utterance, speech; verses, teachings or sayings, particularly of the Saints in poetic form. Mystically, Bani is the divine Sound, Voice or Name, understood to mean the Anahad

Bani (unstruck Sound), the divine creative power. *See also* Name and Shabd.

Bhagavad Gita Literally, the Song of the Lord. It embodies the teachings of Lord Krishna, given in the dialogue between him and Arjuna on the battlefield of Mahabharata, and is one of the most popular books of Hindu philosophy. It lays emphasis on the knowledge of the soul, devotion to God and the performance of one's duties with detachment. In short, it is a guide to self-realization and God-realization according to Hindu philosophy.

bhakti Devotion, worship, adoration, obeisance; a spiritual discipline undertaken to please God, a deity or other revered being. Guru bhakti is devotion to the Guru – following a path of spiritual discipline in accordance with the Guru's instructions.

Bhanwar Gupha Rotating, revolving or whirling (*bhanwar*) cave (*gupha*); a name for the fourth inner region; also referred to as Sohang. This region is where the soul cries out 'sohang' ('I am That') on realizing its complete identity with God, but is as yet separate from him. The soul then goes on to Sach Khand, where it merges with the Lord. *See also* regions.

Bharata Another name for Arjuna. By addressing Arjuna as Bharata, 'descendent of the first universal emperor of ancient India', Lord Krishna is reminding him of his nobility and his Indian origin. *See also* Arjuna.

Brahm The ruler of the three worlds (*triloki*) – physical, astral and causal; the universal mind, another term for Kal; also called Om and Parmeshwar. Brahm also denotes the causal region of Brahmand, known also as **Brahm Lok**. The seat of Brahm is Trikuti, the second of five inner regions above the physical plane. This is the home of the mind and the seedbank of all karma. Saints explain that whatever is subject to change and death falls within the realm of Brahm. *See also* causal region, Kal and Trikuti.

Brahma God of creation in the Hindu triad: Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; Shiva, the destroyer.

Brahmand The third plane of existence, the causal-spiritual realm. Brahmand is the most refined of the three planes (physical, astral and causal-spiritual) below the realm of pure spirit. *See also* Sat Lok.

- causal region** The second inner region, Trikuti, the home of the causal or universal mind; Also known as Brahm Lok and Karan Lok. *See also* planes, regions *and* Trikuti.
- chakra** Wheel, centre, plexus; one of six focuses or centres of prana or subtle life energy in the physical body. Each of the five chakras below the eyes is associated with one of the five vital elements (*tattwas*) of earth, water, fire, air and ether. The sixth chakra, called *ajna* or *aagya chakra*, is also known as *do-dal kamal* (two-petalled lotus); it lies at the mid-point between and behind the eyes and is the seat of the mind and the soul. Chakras are sometimes described as lotuses. *See also* lotus.
- Chidakash** Sky (*aakaash*) of consciousness (*chit*); the subtle realm lying between the eye centre (the two-petalled lotus, a subtle point in the physical body) and the eight-petalled lotus in the astral body. Within this area is found the human mind with all the fate karma held in seed form. It is from here that destiny is manifested. Chidakash is the source of all clairvoyant, telepathic and other miraculous powers. It is also the source of the subtle life energies.
- collyrium** Made of herbs and various substances, collyrium is said to have magical properties and is used in the eyes to improve sight. The mystics of the East use it as a metaphor, conveying the power of the Word to bring sight to the spiritually blind.
- cycle of birth and death** The endless round of incarnating and reincarnating in different life forms, which the soul has to undergo due to the consequences of karma. The soul moves from one life form to another, reaping the harvest of seeds it has sown in previous lives. Also called the wheel of birth and rebirth, wheel of reincarnation, cycle of transmigration and wheel of eighty-four, since Indian saints depict the creation in terms of 8,400,000 different life forms. *See also* karma *and* tattwa.
- Daswan Dwar** Tenth (*daswaan*) gate or door (*dwaar*); the third inner region. The second region, Trikuti, is said to have an inner citadel (*garrh*) with ten gates, nine of which are open. The tenth gate, which leads to the third region, is closed. The soul must open

the tenth gate through ardent meditation on Shabd. Daswan Dwar refers to this gate, and also to the entire third region, which includes Sunn and Maha Sunn. *See also* Maha Sunn, regions *and* Sat Lok.

Dayal Merciful (*dayaal*). Dayal denotes the supreme, benevolent Lord who forgives sins, overlooks failings and grants eternity, as distinguished from Kal, the ruler of the three worlds, who administers justice strictly according to the law of karma. **Dayal Desh** refers to Sat Lok or Sach Khand. *See also* Kal *and* Sat Purush.

Deep Island.

Desh Region, country, realm; mystically, inner region.

Dhun Melody or sound; the inner music or sound; the eternal melody of the Shabd or Word. *See also* Shabd.

dhunatmak Having the character of (*-aatmak*) the sound or melody (*dhun*) of the inexpressible primal Shabd, which cannot be written or spoken, nor heard with the physical ears; the inner music which can be experienced only by the soul. *See also* Name *and* varnatmak.

dhyan Attention, concentration, contemplation. A part of the spiritual practice taught by the Saints, dhyan is the practice of contemplating on the form of the Master at the eye centre. True contemplation is achieved automatically once the inner attention is focused and the mind becomes fully centred. *See also* Radiant Form.

Dissolution Dissolution and Grand Dissolution are the processes whereby the creative power, the Word, is withdrawn from the creation and the manifest creation is dissolved. Dissolution (Pralaya) ends creation up to the level of the second inner region. Grand Dissolution (Maha Pralaya) ends creation up to and including the level of the fourth inner region. Sach Khand, the fifth inner region, is not affected by Dissolution.

durbar Court, court of a king, hall of audience; court of the Lord.

dust In the writings of both Sufi and Indian mystics the image of dust is used to express the unworthiness or humility of the disciple in relation to the greatness of the Master or Lord. *See also* feet of the Master or Lord.

- Dwaparyug** The Copper or Bronze Age. *See also* yuga.
- eighty-four lakh forms of life** *See* cycle of birth and death.
- feet of the Master or Lord** Ordinarily the feet of the Master or Lord symbolize shelter or protection for the disciple. Terms such as 'washing', 'falling at', or the 'dust of' the Master's or Lord's feet are expressions of humility and submission. The feet of the Master can also have an esoteric significance, referring to the feet of the Radiant Form of the Master seen within at the eight-petalled lotus on the astral plane. Also called lotus feet or holy feet. *See also* Radiant Form.
- fifty-two letters** The Sanskrit alphabet is composed of fifty-two letters, said to originate from the lower chakras governed by the gods and goddesses. Because of this, the Sanskrit language is called *dev vaani*, the language of the gods.
- five melodies** The five melodies are the five aspects of Shabd that correspond to the five inner regions. Sant Mat has also been called the path of five Shabds. Those who tread this path must complete the course of these five melodies to gain access to the realm of pure spirituality and absolute reality. *See also* regions *and* Shabd.
- fourth realm** Sach Khand or Sat Lok; the highest of the four realms or planes of existence (physical, astral, causal-spiritual and pure spiritual). *See also* planes *and* Sat Lok.
- Ganesh** The son of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati, Ganesh is portrayed as a short fat man with a protuberant belly and an elephant's head with only one tusk. He is known as the god of wisdom and the remover of obstacles. Ganesh is the deity of the first chakra, which is located in the region of the perineum.
- Grand Dissolution** *See* Dissolution.
- guna** Quality or state of being in nature. The operation of the world is made possible by the interplay of three gunas or attributes: sato-gun, the quality of goodness, peace, beauty, rhythm and harmony; rajogun, the quality of action, achievement, passion and pride; and tamogun, the quality of darkness, inertia and ignorance. All the three gunas are present in human nature, varying in degree according to individuals, and each can be enhanced by providing conditions conducive to its growth and development.

- gurmukh** One whose face (*mukh*) is turned towards the Guru; a highly advanced soul. A gurmukh is one who has completely surrendered to the Guru, as opposed to the manmukh, who is slave to the mind.
- Guru** Destroyer (*ru*) of darkness (*gu*); one who brings light into darkness; a spiritual teacher or Master; a spiritual guide who gives new birth to the soul through initiation into spiritual life. *See also* Master, saint *and* Satguru.
- hansa** A white swan; swan-soul; awakened soul; esoterically, a soul purified by Shabd. In Indian spiritual literature, a hansa is symbolic of grace and purity; its natural food is believed to be pearls, diamonds and rubies, which signify Shabd. The soul when dominated by mind and matter and conditioned by karma is likened to an ugly crow until its transformation into a swan begins in Daswan Dwar, where it sheds its gross coverings. Saints have said that a soul that has reached this stage shines with the brilliance of sixteen suns. The process of transformation culminates in Sach Khand, the region of immortality. Soami Ji generally refers to all souls in Daswan Dwar and beyond as hansas. *See also* Daswan Dwar *and* Mansarovar.
- householder** In Indian thought, human life is traditionally divided into four stages of life: student or youth, householder, recluse and renunciant. In the householder phase the individual faces his or her responsibilities towards the family as a provider and caregiver. Saints continually point out that it is not necessary to renounce the world, but rather it is necessary to integrate spiritual practice into one's daily life while also performing one's duties in the world.
- Ibrahim** Ibrahim (known as Abraham in the Christian tradition) was the first of the Biblical patriarchs and is revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims. According to the Bible he was the father of the Jews through his son Isaac, and in the Qur'an he is noted as the ancestor of the Arabs through his son Ishmael.
- ida** The name of the left energy current that starts from the eye centre and leads upward into the higher spiritual regions. There are two other currents, one on the right and one at the centre. The central

current is known as *sushumna* or *sushmana* or *sukhmana*, and the current to the right of this is called *pingala*. The three currents (left, right and centre) merge into one at a point known as Triveni above Trikuti, the second inner region. In the human body, they are reflected as the three main subtle pranic or energy currents that run along the spinal cord. In kundalini yoga, it is these lower currents that are referred to, while the saints refer to the upper ones. *See also* kundalini *and* sushumna.

incarnation Denotes a manifestation of one of the gods on earth, especially one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu, such as Ram and Krishna. Incarnations appear in the world in different physical forms to bring about internal reform and improvement. *See also* Vishnu.

Indra The Hindu god of the air and sky, as well as rain, storms, thunder and lightning. The king of Hindu gods, Indra rules paradise.

inner ear/s *See* surat.

inner eye/s *See* nirat.

Ishwar The ruler of the first region. *See also* Niranjan.

Jain Follower of or relating to Jainism, an ancient Indian religion that does not follow the Vedas, but rather emphasizes right belief, right action, non-violence, and an ascetic way of life; founded in the sixth century BCE.

Jhahhri Deep Literally, lattice (*jhahhri*) island (*deep*). A region lying immediately below Sahansdal Kamal (thousand-petalled lotus), the first inner region; so called because, from there, the light of the thousand-petalled lotus appears as if seen through a sieve or lattice. According to Soami Ji Maharaj, it is one of the three subdivisions of the astral region. *See also* Niranjan Desh.

Ji A term of respect or endearment.

jyoti Light, flame; the great central light of the first inner region, Sahansdal Kamal, encircled by a thousand smaller lights. The ruler of this region is sometimes referred to as Niranjan, Jyoti Niranjan or Jyoti Swaroop Bhagwan. *See also* Niranjan.

Kal Literally, time or death; the ruler of the three worlds, the true sevadar (one who renders service) who administers justice strictly

according to the law of karma under the orders of the Lord. Also known as Brahm. The domain of Kal (Time) is the whole creation up to Trikuti, which includes the physical, astral and causal worlds and is destroyed at the time of Dissolution (Pralaya). The influence of Kal (as Maha Kal or Great Kal) extends up to the top of Maha Sunn, which is destroyed in a Grand Dissolution (Maha Pralaya), an event that occurs after several Dissolutions. *See also* Brahm *and* Dayal.

Kaliyug Iron Age. *See* yuga.

kamal Lotus.

karma Action; the law of action and reaction, cause and effect, whereby the soul has to face the consequences of all its actions. It is the law of karma that keeps the soul imprisoned in the creation, as it has to keep taking birth in different life forms to account for its actions in previous lives. There are three types of karma: pralabdh karma, the fate or destiny we go through in the present life; kriyaman karma, the new actions performed in the present life, the results of which are reaped in future lives; and sinchit karma, the store of karmas, the balance of unpaid karmas from our past lives. *See also* cycle of birth and death *and* tattwa.

Kaunteya Krishna sometimes addresses Arjuna by the familiar name Kaunteya, the son of Kunti. Kunti is Arjuna's mother. *See also* Arjuna.

Khalsa Literally, pure; a pure disciple. Khalsa is also an order of Sikhs instituted by Guru Gobind Singh.

Krishna One of the most widely revered of the Hindu gods; an incarnation of Vishnu (the preserver god in the Hindu trinity) and the subject of many devotional works. The Bhagavad Gita, the philosophical dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna and one of the most popular books on Hindu philosophy, embodies his expositions on the paths of selfless action, knowledge, devotion and meditation.

kundalini Coiled energy situated at the base of the spine above the lowest centre (*moolaadhaara chakra*). When activated, it unwinds like a serpent and rises up through the central canal of the spine,

awakening the six chakras (energy centres) on the way until it reaches the seventh centre called 'the thousand-petalled lotus' at the top of the skull or above. The practice of kundalini yoga gives the practitioner miraculous powers but can be dangerous and dissipate spiritual energy. *See also* sushumna *and* yoga.

lakh One hundred thousand.

lok Region, world, realm.

lotus Known also as *kamal* or *kanwal*, the lotus is an image often used in Indian mystical expression to designate the subtle or mystic energy centres (chakras) both in the physical body as well as in the higher realms. When seen within by yogis and mystics, the lotus has regular petals arranged around a central axis or pivot, with each 'petal' representing the energy aspect of that centre's formation and function. The lotus has also been used in Indian mysticism as a symbol of perfect detachment. Just as the lotus floats on the water and yet remains dry, so the spiritual aspirant should live in the world without being affected by it, "in the world, but not of it". *See also* chakra *and* Sahansdal Kamal.

maha Great.

Maha Kal Literally, great Kal; ruler of the upper part of Brahmand. *See also* Brahmand *and* Kal.

Maha Pralaya Grand Dissolution. *See* Dissolution.

Maha Sunn The region of intense darkness between the third inner region, Parbrahm, Sunn or Daswan Dwar, and the fourth, Bhanwar Gupha. It is generally described as a part of Sunn rather than a separate region. *See also* Daswan Dwar, Parbrahm *and* Sunn.

Maharaj Literally, great king; used as a title of respect for a saint or Master.

manmukh One whose face (*mukh*) is turned towards the mind (*man*). *See* gurmukh.

Mansarovar Literally, lake (*sarovar*) of spirit (*maanasa*). Mystically, Mansarovar is the name used by some Indian saints for a lake, sea or ocean of spiritual energy and consciousness situated in Daswan Dwar, the third inner region. It is also called the Lake of Nectar (Amritsar). When the soul on its upward journey bathes in this

lake, it washes itself clean of all the gross coverings of mind, matter, gunas (attributes), and karmas, and begins its transformation into pure soul, which saints generally refer to as a *hansa* or swan. *See also* hansa.

Master Spiritual teacher, Guru. *See also* Guru and saint.

maya Illusion, unreality, deception. Maya denotes everything that comes and goes, that is transient. The entire manifest creation (the physical, astral and causal worlds ruled by Brahm) is described as illusory or false because it is impermanent, in contrast to Sat Nam (the true Name), the Supreme Being, which alone is permanent, eternal and true. *See also* Kal.

Moses A Hebrew prophet and lawgiver, Moses was likely born in the thirteenth century BCE in Egypt, from where he led the Hebrew people out of slavery to the outskirts of Canaan, the Promised Land. Said to have received the Ten Commandments directly from God, Moses is mentioned frequently in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (where he is known as Musa), and is portrayed in Sufi literature as *kaleem Allah*, the intimate of God.

mudra A gesture or position that locks and guides energy flow. Practitioners take different positions for each mudra and concentrate attention while holding the position. Mudras are done with different parts of the body, for example hands, mouth, ears, nose, and eyes. Higher forms of mudras can be practised at the eye centre and in the causal realm. *See also* yoga.

muni One who hears or experiences within; a silent sage, a holy person.

Murshid Master in the Islamic tradition. *See also* Master and saint.

Nam *See* Name.

Name In Sant Mat terminology, the Name (*naam*) represents not only the dynamic power of God that created and sustains the universe, but also the current through which souls return to God. In order to elevate human consciousness, which normally operates at the gross level of mind and senses, the Name functions at two levels: at the human level as the holy names given for repetition by

a true Master at initiation, and at God's level as the divine melody called Shabd, experienced through soul consciousness. It must be emphasized that the Name or Nam repetition is invested with the potential to reveal the Shabd of the highest stage only when it is granted by a living true Master. Also known as Bani, Nam, Shabd, Word, Logos, Sound Current, *aakaash naam* or Heavenly Voice, *ida-i aasmaani* or Harmony from the Skies and *kalaam-i Illaahi*, God's Word. *See also* dhunatmak, Shabd and varnatmak.

Narad A celebrated sage of ancient India, Narad Muni was known for his intense devotion to Vishnu. He is said to be one of the ten mind-born sons of Brahma and is depicted as a perfect devotee in the Puranas, which contain many stories and legends about him. A classic work on the path of devotion, the *Narad Bhakti Sutra*, is attributed to him.

neoli karm A practice in hatha yoga of sitting cross-legged and vigorously moving the abdominal muscles from one side to the other with the shoulders bent forward. It is one of the 'six actions' (*shat karma*) and is said to be the crown of hatha yoga, stimulating the gastric fire and curing all disorders of the bodily humours, especially indigestion. *See also* yoga.

nine doors The nine openings or gates of the body: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and the two lower apertures. It is through these openings that the attention, the soul current, disperses into the world. The tenth door is the eye centre, the soul's entry to the inner regions. *See also* third eye.

nine treasures The traditionally mentioned treasures (*nidhi*) of Kubera, the Hindu god of wealth, which include the conch (*shankha*), the great lotus (*mahaapadma*), jasmine (*kunda*), 'tortoise' (*kachchhapa*), sapphire (*nila*) and ruby (*padma-raga*).

Niranjan Without (*nir*) stain (*anjan*); pure; refers to the ruler of the first inner region, Sahansdal Kamal. Known also as Jyoti and Ishwar; can also be a name for God. *See also* Jyoti and Sahansdal Kamal.

Niranjan Desh Niranjan Desh, a name for the first region, is a vast plane with three chief parts: Jhahhri Deep, Shyam Kanj (Sahansdal Kamal) and Set Sunn (White Void). *See also* Jhahhri Deep.

- Nirankar** Without form, the formless One, the Supreme Being. The Lord is said to be beyond all forms, attributes and differentiation. He cannot be likened to any form in the creation. *See also* Dayal and Sat Purush.
- nirat** The seeing power of the soul, a latent faculty awakened through contact with Shabd. It is through nirat, the inner eye of the soul, that the soul beholds the regions beyond the physical plane. Just as a car travels a dark road with the help of its headlights, the soul sometimes goes forward in the inner regions by seeing the path with its own light. The soul's power to hear the melody of Shabd is called surat. *See also* Shabd and surat.
- Noah** A Biblical character, Noah is represented as tenth in descent from Adam. It is written that he was instructed by God to build an ark in which he, his immediate family and two specimens of every animal were then saved from the widespread flood that followed and covered the earth.
- Om** A term for the sound of the second inner region, Trikuti; also one of many names for its lord or ruler, known as Kal, Brahm or Parmeshwar. *See also* Brahm and Kal.
- Parbrahm** Beyond Brahm; the third inner region, a vast realm which includes Daswan Dwar or Sunn as well as Maha Sunn. In the spiritual region of Parbrahm the soul is free from all coverings. *See also* Daswan Dwar, Maha Sunn and Sunn.
- Parmeshwar** Ruler of the three worlds. Sometimes refers to the Supreme Lord. *See also* Brahm.
- Partha** Literally, the son of Pritha (Pritha is another name for Kunti, the mother of Arjuna); a name used by Krishna to address Arjuna. *See also* Arjuna, Bhagavad Gita and Krishna.
- Pind** The physical world; also used to refer to the human body, which serves as a microcosm of the whole creation. Pind is the lowest of the four realms or planes of existence. *See also* Sat Lok.
- pingala** The right energy current. *See also* ida and sushumna.
- planes** The creation is sometimes described in terms of four planes or realms of existence or spheres of consciousness – the physical, astral, causal-spiritual and purely spiritual (Pind, And, Brahm and Sat Lok). Each plane is made up of many vast realms, and

appears to be the very highest plane, since it is complete in itself and penetrates everything beneath it. Each plane is the controlling centre and source of all creation for everything below it, and every plane depends for its energy, power and sustenance on the plane immediately above it. The fourth plane or realm, Sat Lok, is further divided into four stages: Sat Lok or Sach Khand, Alakh, Agam and Anami or Radha Soami. *See also* regions and Sat Lok.

Pralaya *See* Dissolution.

prana Breath, air, wind; subtle life breath or life energy; both the physical breath and the subtle life energy of the body. *See also* yoga.

Pranayam Yogic practice utilizing breath control. *See also* yoga.

Puranas Literally, the old or ancient ones; religio-mythological stories describing the lives and deeds of gods, heroes and great kings. There are eighteen principal Puranas, written at different times. Most of them deal with the theory of creation and the destruction and renewal of the universe.

Purush Being or lord; lord of an inner region. *See also* Sat Purush.

Qur'an The Qur'an or Koran is the sacred scripture of Islam, written in Arabic and revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the beginning of the seventh century. It consists of 114 chapters covering many different topics – spiritual, legal, social and scientific.

Radha Soami Lord (*swaami*) of the soul (*raadha*). The Supreme Lord, the Lord of the highest inner region, Sat Lok or Sach Khand; also the name of the highest and final stage of Sat Lok, Radha Soami Lok or Radha Soami Dham. Another name for Anami, the Lord of that stage. *See also* Anami, Sat Lok and Shabd Yoga.

Radiant Form Light form; astral form; also called the Shabd form. At the time of initiation the Master projects his Radiant Form within the disciple from Shabd, which is the real and ultimate form of the Master. *See also* feet of the Master.

Ram Depending on the context, Ram can refer to (1) the Supreme Being; (2) the incarnation of Vishnu, son of Dasharath, who as the king of Ayodhya was the hero of the epic Ramayana; (3) the individual mind; (4) the universal mind or Brahm, who rules the three worlds. *See also* Brahm and Vishnu.

realms *See* planes.

regions Refers to five regions or spheres of consciousness that the soul crosses on its journey to God-realization: (1) Sahansdal Kamal – the thousand-petalled lotus, also referred to as the astral plane or Sukhsham Jagat and called by Muslims Alam-i Malakoot; (2) Trikuti – the ‘three peaks’ or the causal region; called by Muslims Alam-i Jabaroot; (3) Daswan Dwar – the tenth door, also referred to as Sunn or Parbrahm; called by Muslims Alam-i Lahut; (4) Bhanwar Gupha – the revolving cave, the region where the soul first proclaims ‘Sohang’ as it recognizes its identity with God, but is still separate from him; called by Muslims Alam-i Hutal Hut; (5) Sat Lok or Sach Khand, called by Muslims Alam-i Hoot. This is the realm of truth, the region of pure spirit where the soul merges into an eternal oneness with the Lord, its source. *See also* Sahansdal Kamal, Trikuti, Daswan Dwar, Parbrahm, *and* Sat Lok.

rishi One who sees, enlightened one, seer; a sage who has attained spiritual powers through spiritual discipline.

Sach Khand True, eternal, immutable (*sach*) region (*khand*); another term for Sat Lok. Sach Khand is the ocean of the true Name, the realm of pure spirit, through which the nameless, formless reality of God is made manifest. It is the original home of the soul from where it was sent down into the creation. *See also* regions *and* Sat Lok.

sadh A holy man following a path of spiritual discipline; a mystic. Sometimes the term is applied to an adept or a true saint. Esoterically, a devotee who has reached the third spiritual stage after crossing the regions of mind and matter.

sahaj Easy, natural; the natural state of the soul; the level of spiritual consciousness in which the soul, having realized its own true nature or identity, gravitates easily and naturally towards a complete absorption in God. The state of sahaj begins in Daswan Dwar, the third inner region, and reaches its culmination in Sach Khand, the eternal realm. *See also* Daswan Dwar, regions *and* Sat Lok.

Sahansdal Kamal The thousand (*sahans*) petalled (*dal*) lotus (*kamal*); the first inner region, the headquarters of the astral plane. Described by Indian saints as the central powerhouse of the astral

world and the centre from which all energies below, including the six bodily chakras, have their source. Also referred to as Niranjana Desh, Turiya and Shesh Nag. *See also* regions and Shyam Kanj.

sahib A title of respectful address equivalent to 'sir'; often used after the name of saints as a mark of respect, as in Kabir Sahib or Tulsi Sahib.

saint In Sant Mat literature, the term 'saint' generally refers to a mystic of the highest order, a God-realized mystic who has attained the region of pure spirit, Sat Lok or Sach Khand. The Hindi term *sant* may also be translated as 'saint' and have the same meaning, or it may simply denote a holy person. *See also* Guru, Master and Satguru.

sant *See* saint.

Sar Shabd Literally, Essential (*saar*) Sound (*shabd*); the sound above Trikuti, the second inner region. From Primal Shabd (Aad Shabd) emanated three forms of Shabd (Sat Shabd, Sar Shabd and Anahad Shabd) in order to create and sustain the various regions of creation. The soul, after crossing the first inner region, catches on to Anahad Shabd and becomes absorbed in Sar Shabd, which takes it to Parabrahm, a region beyond the three gunas (attributes). From there, it attaches itself to Sat Shabd (true Sound), which helps it finally to merge into Aad Shabd. *See also* Anahad Shabd, Name, nirat and Shabd.

Sat Lok True (*sat*) region (*lok*). Sat Lok is the ocean of the true Name, the realm of pure spirit, through which the nameless, formless reality of God is made manifest. It is the original home of the soul from where it was sent down into the creation. The entire universe is described either in terms of five regions above the physical plane: Sahasr Kal, Trikuti, Daswan Dwar, Bhanwar Gupha and Sat Lok or Sach Khand (saints have used Sat Lok and Sach Khand interchangeably); or in terms of four realms or planes of existence: the physical, astral, causal-spiritual and pure spiritual (Pind, And, Brahm and the fourth realm, which is also called Sach Khand or Sat Lok). Thus Sat Lok has been used as a name for both the highest of the five regions as well as the fourth realm, as

these are the same domain of pure spirituality. Sat Lok is further divided into four stages: Sat Lok or Sach Khand, Alakh, Agam, and Anami or Radha Soami. The presiding Lords of the four stages of Sat Lok represent four different aspects of the Lord's true form. Soami Ji says: "Know that until here [from Anami to Sat Lok], I am in my essential form, and recognize this as my very own form, complete and perfect." (*Sar Bachan Poetry*, 26:A1.1:22). *See also* realms, regions *and* Sach Khand.

Sat Nam Literally, true (*sat*) Name (*Nam*) of God; a name for the fifth and highest region, Sat Lok or Sach Khand; also a name of the Lord of this region. Also known as Sat Purush, Nirankar and Sat Nam Anami. *See also* Dayal, Nirankar *and* Sat Purush.

Sat Purush Literally, true (*sat*) Lord or Being (*purush*); the true Father; God. Specifically, Sat Purush is the Lord of Sat Lok or Sach Khand, the eternal realm. Also known as Sat Nam and Nirankar. *See also* Dayal *and* Nirankar.

Satguru True (*sat*) spiritual teacher (*guru*); a Master who has access to Sat Lok or Sach Khand, the fifth inner region. In Sant Mat terminology, a Satguru is a saint who is ordained to take certain allotted souls back to God by initiating them into Surat Shabd Yoga. *See also* Guru, Master, saint.

satsang The company (*sang*) of truth (*sat*), association with the truth. In Sant Mat terminology, satsang ordinarily means the company of saints or advanced souls, or a gathering of devotees held under the auspices of a saint or Master, where the subject of discussion centres around God, the holy Name and the role of the Master. Soami Ji also uses the word satsang in its deeper sense, which is inner satsang, the association or union of the soul with Shabd.

Satyug Golden Age. *See* yuga.

Set Sunn Literally, white (*set*) void (*sun*) or emptiness; luminous void or lotus; the highest of three levels of Sahansdal Kamal, the first region or astral plane. *See also* astral plane, regions *and* Sahansdal Kamal.

seven heavens Heaven is a place regarded in various religions as the abode of God (or the gods) and the angels, and of the good after

death, often traditionally depicted as being above the sky. In Jewish, Islamic and Christian traditions the number of heavens is commonly counted as seven, the seventh being the highest, a place of perfect bliss. The Qur'an and the Sufi tradition speak of seven heavens and seven netherworlds.

Shabd Literally, sound, voice, word, melody; hymn or verse from scriptures; esoterically, the underlying current of divine energy that created and sustains the universe; also called Word, Name, Logos, Holy Spirit, Bani, Sound Current, Unstruck Music, Music of the Spheres, Unutterable Utterance. It was through Shabd, the eternal power of God, that souls were sent down from their original home to inhabit the creation, and it is through the same power that they must retrace their journey homewards. However, no one but a living true Master can reveal the secret of Shabd and connect the disciple's consciousness to it. *See also* bani, Name, Satguru and surat.

Shabd mystic *See* Satguru.

Shabd Yoga The union (*yoga*) with Word (*shabd*); the merging of the soul with its essence. Shabd Yoga or Surat Shabd Yoga is the path to God-realization taught by the saints, through which the current of consciousness is applied to the hearing of the Sound or Shabd within. Once the soul merges into the Shabd, it is carried by Shabd to its source, the Lord. Also called *sultaan al-azkaar*, the king of all repetitions.

Shakti The Hindu goddess, power or female energy known as the mother of the universe. Shakti is also the highest form of maya (illusion). Also called Maya or Devi, the mother of gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. *See also* Brahma and maya.

Shastras Hindu scriptures; books of philosophy and moral codes.

Shiva God of destruction in the Hindu trinity of creator, preserver and destroyer (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). Known also as Mahadev, Mahesh and Maheshwar.

Shri A honorific of respect, used before a name.

Shukhdev Son of the celebrated Rishi Ved Vyas, Rishi Shukhdev was known to have been spiritually enlightened while he was in his

mother's womb. His father directed him, at a young age, to accept King Janak as his Guru. He went towards the palace of King Janak twelve times but always returned, as he had misgivings about the life style of the king in his palace and hence his suitability to be a guru. On receiving an indirect reproach from Rishi Narad for his misgivings, he again set out to meet the king and became his disciple. He is said to have narrated the *Bhagavata Purana* to King Parikshit.

Shyam Kanj Literally, black (*shyam*) lotus (*kanj*); the second of three levels of Sahansdal Kamal, the first region or astral plane. *See also* Niranjan Desh, regions *and* Sahansdal Kamal.

Sikh Literally, disciple; esoterically, one who has reached the first inner region. A follower of Sikhism, the religion derived from the teachings of Guru Nanak and his nine successors. *See also* Adi Granth.

simran Remembrance, recollection, repetition of holy names; calling to mind or meditating upon the Supreme Being. It is through simran, the first part of the spiritual practice as taught by the saints, that the attention is withdrawn from the outer world and concentrated at the eye centre. *See also* Shabd Yoga.

six centres *See* chakra.

six focuses *See* chakra.

six schools of Hindu philosophy The Shat Darshanas (six views); the six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy: Nyaya (the logical school), Vaisesika (the atomic school), Samkhya (the dualist school), Patanjali's Yoga (the practical school), Purva Mimamsa (the earlier enquiry) and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta (the last enquiry). All the six schools have the same goal: the liberation of the soul from the rounds of birth and death and union with God or the Absolute.

Soami A variant of 'swami' used in the term 'Radha Soami' and the name 'Soami Ji'. *See also* Swami *and* Radha Soami.

Sohang Literally, 'I am That'; the stage where the soul realizes its identity with God, recognizing that it is of the same essence as the Lord, but is as yet separate from him. This occurs in the fourth

inner region, Bhanwar Gupha, at the threshold of the eternal region, Sat Lok or Sach Khand, where the soul will merge into oneness with God. Sohang is also a name for the lord or ruler of the fourth inner region, as well as for the region itself, Sohang Desh. *See also* Bhanwar Gupha, regions *and* Sat Lok.

Sound Current Logos, Shabd, unstruck music, spiritual sound; the Word; the creative power that reverberates through all regions of the creation, with which conscious contact can be made within the human body. *See also* Name, Shabd, Shabd Yoga *and* surat.

Sufi Sufis are those involved in the mystical dimension of Islam. It is believed that the term is derived from the Arabic word '*suf*', which means 'wool', because of the woollen dress worn by the practitioners of the inward or esoteric Islam.

Sunn Void, devoid of mind and matter; primarily used to denote the name of the third inner region, Daswan Dwar, where the soul becomes free from the bondage of matter, mind and the three attributes or gunas. Also called Parbrahm. **Sunn Mandal**, the 'empty realm', is in the sphere of Sunn. *See also* Daswan Dwar, guna, Parbrahm *and* regions.

surat One of two primary powers of the soul, at times called the inner ear or ears; refers to the faculty of the soul to hear the melody of Shabd. It is by means this inner sound that the soul travels the vast regions between the physical world and Sat Lok and experiences the bliss of the inner realms. The power of the soul to see within is known as nirat. Surat can refer to the soul itself, as well as soul consciousness and the attention of the soul. *See also* bani, Name, nirat, Shabd *and* Shabd Yoga.

Surat Shabd Yoga The union (*yoga*) of soul or consciousness (*surat*) with Word (*shabd*). *See also* Shabd Yoga.

sushumna The central energy current in the finer body; also called *shah rag*, the royal vein. It is the sushumna current which leads upwards from the eye centre into the higher inner regions, while ida is the left flowing current and pingala the right. This higher current should not be confused with the sushumna of the yogis, a subtle pranic energy current that flows up the spinal column and

is associated with the physical energy centres or chakras. *See also* ida, prana, Shabd Yoga *and* yoga.

swaas sohang A mystic practice in which the word 'Sohang' (I am that) is repeated with the inhaling and exhaling of breath at the heart centre. *See also* prana *and* yoga.

Swami Commonly used as a term of respect for spiritual teachers; may also denote the Lord, the Supreme Being, the Master. Also spelled 'Soami'.

swan-soul *See* Daswan Dwar, hansa *and* Mansarovar.

Swarg In general, heaven or paradise; in Hindu mythology the paradise of Indra, the ruler of the Gods.

tattwa Literally, that (*tat*) -ness (*tva*); a thing as it is in itself; essence, primary esoteric element. Indian metaphysics describes the five tattwas as the 'substance' of the causal, astral, and physical worlds; namely, ether (*akasha*), air (*vayu* or *pavana*), fire (*agni* or *tejas*), water (*jala* or *pani*) and earth (*prithvi*). Saints explain that the sin of destroying life is proportionate to the stage of development that it has reached, or the number of active *tattwas* that it possesses. *See also* guna, karma *and* yoga.

ten Gurus The ten Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak, who taught the path of Shabd from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

third eye A point in the subtle body a little above and between the two eyebrows, where practitioners of meditation concentrate their attention in order to withdraw the soul currents from the physical body and enter the inner realms. Also referred to as the eye centre, tisra til and tenth door. *See also* chakra, Chidakash, nine doors *and* regions.

three gods *See* Brahma, Vishnu *and* Shiva.

three worlds Triloki; three (*tri*) realms (*lok*); the physical, astral and causal worlds, which fall within the domain of Brahm. The material world is the physical world as we know it. The astral world is the realm of finer, predominantly physical-mental energy, while the energy of the causal world is finer still. *See also* Brahm *and* regions.

tisra til *See* third eye.

Tretayug Silver Age. *See also* yuga.

Trikuti Literally, three (*tri*) peaks (*kuti*); the second inner region counting upwards from the lowest. Trikuti is the headquarters of the causal plane and the seat of universal mind or Brahm, the ruler of the three worlds (physical, astral and causal). Also called Brahm Lok. *See also* Brahm, causal region *and* regions.

Turiya *See* Sahansdal Kamal.

Upanishads A series of philosophical compositions in the Vedas that relate to mystical teachings. The doctrines were named Upanishad (to sit near or close) because they were to be imparted directly to the disciple by the teacher. *See also* Vedanta *and* Vedas.

varnatmak Having the nature or character of (*-aatmak*) the expressible (*varn*); that which can be written and spoken, and heard by the physical ears. Names such as God, Hari, Radha Soami and Allah are varnatmak. When varnatmak names are given by a true Master at initiation as names to be repeated by a disciple to concentrate attention, they are invested with the potential to reveal the dhunatmak Name, another name for the inner Sound or Shabd. *See also* dhunatmak, Name, Shabd *and* Shadbd Yoga.

Ved Vyas (c.3000 BCE) A famous rishi of ancient India, Ved Vyas (first known as Krishnadvaipayana) was the son of Rishi Parashara. He is attributed with the authorship of the epic saga of ancient Indian history, legend and mythology, the Mahabharata, as well as the Brahma Sutras and the eighteen Puranas.

Vedanta Literally, end (*anta*) of the Vedas; acme of the Vedas. Vedanta is one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy, a philosophy based on the Upanishads. Vedanta is thought to be an exposition of the deepest truths contained in the Vedas, based on the experiences of those who gained knowledge of the highest order through intuition and inspiration. According to Vedanta, the object of existence is not salvation but realization. A Vedantist is one who follows the Vedantic philosophy. *See also* Upanishads *and* Vedas.

Vedas Literally, knowledge; revealed knowledge as embodied in the four early Hindu scriptures (*Rig Veda*, *Sam Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Atharv Veda*). The Vedas deal with spiritual matters, the divine

powers of gods, sacred formulas (*mantras*) and the problems of life in the world. The Vedas reveal that some of their authors knew about the Word of God, which they called Sound (*naad*) or Word (*vaak*). The term also refers to Vedic literature in general, including the Upanishads and various interpretive texts. *See also* Upanishads *and* Vedanta.

Vishnu God of preservation in the Hindu trinity of creator, preserver and destroyer (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva).

wine Persian Sufi tradition often uses the intoxication of wine as a metaphor for the effect of divine love, and also as a metaphor to represent the Shabd. While the Shabd is often simply called the 'wine', metaphors for the Master, in his physical and astral form, who unites the disciple with the wine of Shabd, include the 'wine-pourer', the 'wine-seller' and the 'wine tavern'. Metaphors for the disciple, the drinker of the wine, who seeks to be absorbed in the Shabd, include the 'drunkard' and the 'wine goblet'. *See also* Shabd. *See also* Shabd.

Word *See* Name *and* Shabd.

Yama Literally, restrainer. Yama administers the fate of souls after their death; thus, the lord of death, the angel of death, the ruler and judge of the dead. *See also* Kal.

yoga From the Sanskrit *yoga* meaning 'to yoke or join'; union. One of the six systems of Indian philosophy, yoga is a code of physical, ascetic and mystic practices of ancient origin meant to lead the human soul to union with God. It is believed to have been founded by the sage Yajnavalkya and later codified by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutra. A *yogi* is one who practises yoga and a *yogishwar* is a yogic adept.

yuga Age or cycle of time. According to Hindu scriptures, time is divided into four recurring yugas or cycles: Satyug or Kritayug (the Age of Truth or the Golden Age), Tretayug (the Silver Age), Dwaparyug (the Copper or Bronze Age), and Kaliyug (the Dark or Iron Age). Kaliyug is the present and the last yuga of the cycle.

Notes on Mystics and Authors Cited

al-Ghazali (1058–1111) Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Tulsi al-Shafi'i al-Ghazali was born and died in Tus in northern Persia. As a Sufi as well as one of the foremost Islamic theologians, philosophers and legalists of his day, he became the first to integrate Sufism with orthodox Islam at a time when Sufism was deemed heretical. He is credited as the author of about fifty books, a number of which are regarded as seminal works of orthodox Islam theology. In *Mishkat al-Anwar* (The Niche of Lights), he describes the superiority of mystical experience over other forms of knowledge.

Amar Das, Guru (1479–1574) Guru Amar Das was the third successor in the line of Guru Nanak. Born in the Punjab, he came to his master, Guru Angad, late in life and became Guru at the age of seventy-three. He is credited with starting the institution of the langar (free community kitchen). He compiled the works of his two predecessors, to which he added his own poetic works of 907 shabds. This collection became the basis of Guru Arjun's later compilation, the *Adi Granth*.

Angad, Guru (1504–1552) Guru Angad was the second Guru in the line of succession of Guru Nanak. Born at Lahina in Ferozpur District in the Punjab, he was a religious teacher and follower of the goddess Durga. On his annual pilgrimage to Durga's shrine, he met Guru Nanak, became his disciple and then never left his presence. He was renamed 'Angad' by Guru Nanak because he was as dear to him as his own limbs (*ang*). Appointed by Guru Nanak

as his successor a few days before Guru Nanak's death, Guru Angad is credited with the invention of the Gurmukhi alphabet, the script in which the Punjabi language is written.

Arjun, Guru (1563–1606) Guru Arjun Dev was the fifth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak. He was born in Amritsar District in the Punjab and was the son of Guru Ram Das. Guru Arjun Dev collected, classified and compiled the writings of the Adi Granth, including compositions of saints from all over India and neighbouring countries to emphasize the oneness of God, the equality of all people and the pursuit of truth. He built a temple in Amritsar that has come to be known as the Golden Temple.

Augustine (354–430) Born in Thagaste, Numidia (now Souk Ahras, Algeria), Saint Augustine became Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in 396. Considered one of the most significant early Christian thinkers, his integration of classical philosophy and Christian theology created a system that influenced all later Christian thought. His surviving works number 113 books and treatises, over 500 sermons and more than 200 letters. Of these, the most influential have been *Confessions* and *The City of God*.

Beni Beni Sahib was a fourteenth-century Indian mystic and one of the saints whose compositions have been incorporated into the Adi Granth. The three shabds included in the Adi Granth are marked by an intense spiritual longing and indicate the various paths explored by him on his quest. These shabds express Beni Sahib's conclusion that without the Guru's instruction the way to liberation will not be found.

Bhartari Hari Bhartari Hari was a twelfth-century king who is believed to have lived and died in Schwan, Sindh, now in Pakistan. He renounced the world and became a yogi, later becoming a disciple of Gorakhnath. Some of his writings in Sanskrit still exist, including three collections known as *Shringar Shatah*, *Niti Shatah* and *Vairag Shatah*.

Bhikha (c.1713–1763) Bhikha Sahib was an Indian mystic from Uttar Pradesh. He was initiated by Gulal Sahib and was nominated as his successor by him. His works include *Ram Jahaz* (The Ship of

Ram), *Ram Rag* (The Melody of Ram) and *Ram Shabad* (The Word of Ram).

Bose, Sir J. C. (1858–1937) Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, a noted Indian physicist and plant physiologist, was born in Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh) and was educated and spent his professional career in Calcutta. His most famous work proved that there were no clear-cut differences between the nervous systems of plants and animals, and he demonstrated the apparent power of feelings in plants, exemplified by the quivering of injured plants. In the course of his research, he felt that he had substantiated the Hindu belief that the whole universe was an aspect of the Eternal One. His books include *Response in the Living and Non-Living* (1902) and *The Nervous Mechanisms of Plants* (1926).

Buddha (c.563–483 BCE) Buddha is the honorific title (meaning 'enlightened one') given to Prince Siddhartha Gautama of the Shakya clan of India. He was a great sage who taught the principles that formed the foundation of Buddhism. Born into the family of a minor king in Lumbini, Kapilavastu, on the border of Nepal, he renounced his family and future kingdom to set out in pursuit of spiritual truth. It is said that he sat in meditation under a peepul tree in Gaya in Bihar District, where he experienced the 'Great Awakening' when he was thirty-five. In Varanasi (Benares), he taught the 'Four Noble Truths' and the 'Eightfold Path', which were based on his experience.

Bulleh Shah (1680–1758) Born into an aristocratic Muslim family, Bulleh Shah grew up in Kasur, near Lahore, where he was educated in Arabic and Persian. He received spiritual light from Shah Inayat Qadri of Lahore and incurred severe disapproval from his family and community for becoming a disciple of this simple, low-caste gardener. Bulleh Shah attained fame for his songs containing deep esoteric truths, many of which are still recited and sung in India and Pakistan.

Charandas (1703–1782) Sant Charandas was a mystic poet from Rajasthan who became a disciple of Shukhdev Swami at the age of nineteen, practising Surat Shabd Yoga for twelve years with

great dedication before expounding the teachings of the saints. He spent the latter part of his life in Delhi giving satsang and initiation. His disciples include Sahjo Bai and Daya Bai.

Chaturdas (c.15th–16th century) Pundit Chaturdas was the chief brahmin of Varanasi (Benares), the seat of Hindu religious learning, during the time of Guru Nanak. In discussions with Guru Nanak, he was led away from idol worship and the worship of symbols and converted to an understanding of the one and only God. He became a disciple of Guru Nanak and an ardent practitioner of his teachings.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772–1834) Coleridge was a noted English poet, critic and philosopher whose masterpieces include *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. He was born in Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, England and was educated at Cambridge, where he imbibed revolutionary ideas and then left to found a communist society in the United States. These plans failed and he returned to teaching and journalism in Bristol. Even with his small output of poetry, his talent was evident. He was also known for his critical writing and for his theological and politico-sociological works.

Dadu (c.1544–1603) Born into a family of cotton carders in Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat, Dadu was only eleven when he was initiated by Sri Vriddhananda. At the age of nineteen, following the command of his master, he started teaching the practice of the mystic Name in Jaipur and other parts of Rajasthan, accepting both Muslims and Hindus as disciples, but insisting on vegetarianism and abstention from alcohol. He came to be known as Dadu Dayal, Dadu the Merciful, for his compassionate nature. He wrote more than five thousand verses, hymns and aphorisms in Hindi on spiritual and philosophical themes, all characterized by their forthright language, often challenging the orthodox views of the day.

Dharamdas (c.1420–1532) Though a rich merchant and banker at Bandhogarh in Uttar Pradesh, Dhani Dharamdas showed a devotional bent of mind from early childhood. He believed in traditional

rites, rituals and idol worship until he met Kabir, who initiated him into the practice of the Word. As he was one of the successors of Kabir, he also taught the doctrine of the Word. Some of his poems are printed under the title *Dhani Dharamdasji ki Shabdavali*.

Diogenes (c.412–323 BCE) Diogenes was born in Sinope (modern-day Sinop, Turkey) and died at Corinth. Diogenes of Sinope is said to have been a disciple of Antisthenes, and, like Antisthenes, he made a virtue of asceticism. He is one of the best known of the Cynic philosophers. He valued the verbal over the written, so what is known of his philosophy is from other writers.

Farid (1181–1265) Sheikh Farid, or Baba Farid, a Muslim saint whose verses are preserved in the Adi Granth, was the earliest known mystic poet in the Punjabi language. Born near Multan (now in Pakistan), Farid undertook rigorous self-discipline and physically punishing methods in his attempt to achieve his goal of God-realization. Eventually, he was advised to go to Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki of Delhi, who revealed to him the path of the Word.

Farid-ud-Din Attar (c.1142–1220) Farid-ud-Din Abu Hamid Muhammad was born in Nishapur in northeastern Persia. He may have worked as an herbalist or doctor, as 'attar' means apothecary or perfumer. Attar is regarded as one of the greatest Persian Sufi writers, composing over 45,000 rhyming couplets and many works of prose. He is probably best known for his allegorical *Mantiq al-Tayr* (Conference of the Birds). Other significant works include *Ilahi-Namah* (Book of God), *Musibat-Namah* (Book of Affliction), *Divan* (Collected Poems) and *Tadhkirat al-Aulia* (Memoirs of the Saints), which covers the collected works of almost a hundred Sufis and is regarded as a reliable historical document.

Garibdas (1717–1778) Mahatma Garibdas was born into an agricultural family in the village of Chhurani in the District of Rohtak in Haryana. It is alleged that he was initiated by Kabir in a dream. He subsequently established his spiritual centre in Chhurani. Some of his poems are published under the title *Garibdas Ji ki Bani*.

Gobind Singh, Guru (1666–1708) Guru Gobind Singh, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, was the tenth guru in the line of Guru Nanak. He was born in Patna, Bihar and became a Guru when he was only nine years old. He wrote inspiring poetry in Punjabi and is known for founding the Khalsa (pure of faith) and for organizing his followers into a military force.

Goldsmith, Oliver (1730–1774) An Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist and poet, Oliver Goldsmith grew up in Kilkenny West, Ireland. He studied in Dublin, London and Edinburgh, eventually practising medicine in London until he turned to writing and translation. *The Vicar of Wakefield* secured his reputation as a novelist, *The Deserted Village* as a poet and *She Stoops to Conquer* as a dramatist.

Goya (1633–1713) Bhai Nand Lal Goya, an eminent scholar of Arabic and Persian, was born in Ghazni, Afghanistan and in 1652 moved to Multan, where he stayed for a period in the court of Emperor Aurangzeb. Later, he became a member of the personal staff of Prince Mu'azzam, Aurangzeb's eldest son, in Delhi. In 1682, when pressure was exerted on him to adopt Islam, he escaped to Anandpur Sahib and took refuge with Guru Gobind Singh. His best known works in Persian verse are *Zindagi Nama* and *Divan-i Goya*.

Hafiz (1320–1389) Born in Shiraz, in the state of Fars in Persia, Shams-ud-Din Muhammad was one of the greatest of the Persian Sufi poets. As one who knew the Qur'an by heart (a hafiz), he came to be called 'Hafiz' or 'Khwaja Hafiz'. His compendium of ghazals or love poems, the *Divan-i Hafiz*, is universally acknowledged not only as a work of great literary merit but also as one of considerable mystic import. His poetry is well known today in both the East and the West.

Haridas (c.1480–1575) Swami Haridas was born in the village of Rajpur, in Uttar Pradesh. He was noted for his simplicity and devotion and was known as the Mystic Saint of Brindavan. It is said that he was a teacher of Tansen, the famous musician at Emperor Akbar's court. His compositions are still sung and his works continue to be published.

Jagjivan (1682–1750) Jagjivan Sahib was born in Sarhada, District Barabanki, in Uttar Pradesh. He was a disciple of Bulla Sahib, who taught the path of the Word. His books include *Gyan Prakash* (Light of Knowledge), *Maha Pralaya* (Grand Dissolution), *Pratham Granth* (The First Book) and *Shabd Sagar* (Ocean of Shabd).

Jesus Christ (c.6 BCE–CE 30) Also called Jesus the Messiah, Jesus of Galilee and Jesus of Nazareth, Christ was born in Judaea to Jewish parents. None of his writings have survived and all that is known about him is derived from the accounts recorded by others, including those in the four gospels of the New Testament of the Bible. From these accounts, it is apparent that he taught that the relationship of the soul to God is one of love, and that the kingdom of God is within. It is generally accepted that he practised and preached his philosophy in Palestine and that his teachings antagonised both the Roman government and the prevailing Jewish orthodoxy, resulting in his crucifixion.

Kabir (1398–1518) Kabir Sahib was a saint and poet from Varanasi (Benares) who was a contemporary of Guru Nanak and Guru Ravidas. Legends surround his birth, life and death, and both Hindus and Muslims claim him as their own. He taught that the one God can be reached through the practice of Nam and emphasized the central importance of the guru, the reality of transmigration, the law of karma and the equality of all human beings in the eyes of God. He condemned rites, rituals and all external observances. A selection of his poems is included in the *Adi Granth*, and his writings are still widely quoted in daily life throughout India, having become a part of folk music and popular culture.

Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804) Born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now in Russia), Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher whose comprehensive and systematic work in the theory of knowledge, ethics and aesthetics had a great impact on subsequent philosophy. He produced a stream of masterpieces, amongst which the best known are *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical*

Reason and Critique of Judgement. These three volumes expound upon Kant's critical philosophy, which is known as Kantianism.

Lalo (b.1452) Bhai Lalo was born and worked as a carpenter in Saidpur (now Aimanabad, Pakistan). He became a disciple of Guru Nanak, who had stopped at Saidpur on his journey to visit the sacred places of pilgrimage of the Hindus. Thereafter, Bhai Lalo taught the message of Nam in Saidpur.

Madan Singh (d.1705) Bhai Madan Singh was a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh. He was a soldier who went to Anandpur to serve his Guru in his stables and was said to have been a poet of some merit. He died in the battle of Chamkaur in defence of his Guru.

Mansur (857-922) Hazrat Mansur al-Hallaj was a controversial figure in Sufism and Islamic mysticism. Born in Tus in the province of Fars, Persia, he travelled widely to various countries, including India. He eventually settled in Baghdad. His bold teachings on the way to an intimate relationship with God attracted a large following. His assertion, "Ana al-Haq" (I am God), led to his arrest on a charge of heresy in 913 and, eventually, to his cruel public execution in 922.

Muhammad (570-632) The Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca and lived in what is now Saudi Arabia. He is called 'the Messenger', as he brought the Muslim teachings to the people of his time. He taught the importance of worshipping the one God, Allah. The message revealed to him is recorded in the Qur'an, and traditions concerning his life and teachings are found in the Hadith.

Muinuddin Chishti (1143-1236) A well known Sufi born in Sistan (now in Afghanistan), Hazrat Muinuddin Chishti moved to India at an early age and settled in Ajmer, Rajasthan, where he remained in meditation for many years. He then began teaching the unity of being or oneness with the Lord, to be attained through both mental and vocal repetition of the Names of God. He was the founder of the Chishti line of mystics, which includes Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Sheikh Farid and Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia.

Namdev (c.1270-1350) A tailor and calico printer by profession, Sant Namdev was initiated into the path of the Word by Visoba

Khechar. He lived in Pandharpur in the beginning of his life, later on moving to the Punjab, where he spent the last twenty-five years of his life. He died in the village of Ghuman, the birthplace of Baba Jaimal Singh. He wrote thousands of devotional poems in Marathi, Hindi and Punjabi. His writings are preserved in *Namdev Gatha*, and some of them are also included in the Adi Granth.

Nanak, Guru (1469–1539) Born in Talwandi (now in Pakistan), Guru Nanak travelled widely in India and nearby countries to spread the doctrine of the mystic Name. At a time when there was no mechanized form of transport, legend says that he went as far as the south of India and to Mecca in Arabia. He endeavoured to transform the prejudices and superstitions of the people, emphasizing that ritualistic practices and external forms of worship kept the seeker of God away from the truth. He was the first Guru in the line of the ten Gurus whose teachings are recorded in the Adi Granth. He appointed his disciple, Bhai Lehna, as his successor, who he renamed as Guru Angad.

Nischaldas (c.1792–1862) Swami Nischaldas Ji was from Kungar Village of the Hissar district in Haryana. He was initiated in childhood by a member of the Dadu Panthi sect, and studied Sanskrit and Vedanta. Ram Singh, King of Bundi, was his disciple. His writings include *Vichar Sagar* (which so impressed Swami Vivikenanda that he was led to declare it a book of great influence in India) and *Yukti Prakash*.

Niyaz (c.1760–1834) Shah Niyaz Ahmad Bareilvi, a Sufi, was born in Sirhand in the Punjab. He was educated under the Sufi Maulana Fakhr al-Din, and taught for some time in Delhi before moving to Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, where he established a Sufi monastery. A prolific author, his works on Sufism include a number of treatises together with poetry in Arabic and Persian. A favourite theme of his writings is “unity of being”.

Paltu (c.1710–1780) Born in Nanga-Jalalpur in Uttar Pradesh, Paltu Sahib lived in Ayodhya, a town sacred to the Hindus, where he was a grocer by profession. A disciple and successor of Gobind Sahib, Paltu fearlessly denounced the rituals and customs of

organized religion. For his bold utterances, he was persecuted and burnt alive by the enraged orthodoxy. His poems, which convey his message directly to the hearts of his readers, are published under the title *Paltu Sahib ki Bani*.

Pipa (1408–1468) A Rajput king, Raja Pipa was the ruler of Gagaraungarh in Rajasthan, and was a devotee of the goddess Durga. He became a disciple of Guru Ravidas and achieved realization through the practice of the Name. One of his poems is included in the Adi Granth.

Plato (c.427–347 BCE) One of the most renowned of the ancient Greek philosophers, Plato was born of distinguished Athenian parents and was mentored by Socrates from an early age. His philosophical writings, presented as dialogues with Socrates, speak of the soul's immortality, its forgetfulness of its divine origin and its transmigration into other physical bodies. Plato's political theories appear in *The Republic*, in which he explored the nature and structure of a just society.

Qalandar, Bu Ali (c.1285–c.1324) Hazrat Sharafuddin Bu Ali Shah Qalandar was born in Iraq and migrated to the city of Panipat in present day Haryana. He was an eminent Islamic scholar and jurist at the king's court in Delhi who later became a Sufi mystic and poet. He wrote in Persian as well as in Punjabi. His writings include the *Maktubat-i Bu Ali Qalandar*, *Divan-i Bu Ali Qalandar* and *Masnawi*.

Ram Das, Guru (1534–1581) Guru Ram Das was the fourth Guru in the line of succession of Guru Nanak. Born into humble circumstances at Lahore (now in Pakistan), he became the son-in-law of Guru Amar Das, who appointed him as his successor. Guru Ram Das founded the city now known as Amritsar and composed more than 600 of the verses in the Adi Granth, including the Lavan, which is recited in the Sikh wedding ceremony.

Rama Tirtha (1873–1906) Born at Murariwala, a village in the district of Gujranwala, Punjab, Swami Rama Tirtha became a follower of Bhakta Dhana Rama at the age of ten. His spiritual development continued with his readings of the Gita. He lived a life of devotion

to God and he was ultimately led to Vedanta. His desire to teach the life of Vedanta led to visits to the United States and Japan and his publishing of a series of poems in Urdu. Upon his return to India, he retired to the Himalayas to pursue a life of spirituality.

Ravidas (1414–1532) Guru Ravidas was a well-known saint who was born in Uttar Pradesh, lived in Kashi (present-day Varanasi) and travelled widely across Rajasthan and other parts of India teaching the path of devotion to the Word. He was a contemporary of Kabir and Guru Nanak and is believed to have been a disciple of Swami Ramanand. He supported himself as a cobbler, and in spite of this profession, which in his time was viewed as of low status, he had a great impact on the many people who came to him for spiritual guidance, including Mira Bai, princess of Mewar, and Raja Pipa, a Rajput king. Some of his writings are preserved in the *Adi Granth*.

Rumi, Jalaluddin (1207–1273) Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, the most famous of the Sufi poet-saints, was from Balkh in present-day Afghanistan. His family settled in Konya in Rum (now in Turkey), hence his appellation Rumi. He made a deep study of Islamic scriptures and became one of the foremost scholars of his time. Around the year 1244, in his late thirties, he met the wandering dervish, Shams-i Tabriz, who became his Master. In 1246 Shams disappeared and Rumi was desolate. Suffering the ache of divine longing, Rumi expressed his pain in poetry, composing his *Rubaiyat*, the six-volume *Masnavi*, and the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz*, written in memory of his Master.

Sa'di (c.1213–1291) Sheikh Sa'di was a famous Persian poet and social reformer who also wrote mystical verse. Born in Shiraz, in present day Iran, Sa'di lived much of his life as a wandering dervish. For thirty years he travelled throughout much of the Islamic world, as far as India to the east and Syria to the west, returning to Shiraz late in life. His most famous works in Persian are the *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden), the *Bustan* (literally, the fragrant garden, commonly translated as The Orchard), *Ghazaliyat* (Lyrics) and *Qasa'id* (Odes).

- Sahjo Bai** An eighteenth-century saint of Rajasthan, Sahjo Bai led a householder's life and was known for her selfless devotion to her Master, Sant Charandas. She authored a book of poems, *Sahaj Prakash* (Light on the Natural State), which are simple and direct in expression, filled with devotion and love for her Master.
- Sarmad** (1618–1660) A trader from Kashan in Persia, thought by many to be Jewish, Muhammad Sa'id Sarmad settled in Delhi in his later years. A prolific poet, his themes included the transitory nature of life, the supreme Reality and love of the Beloved. He had a large following and, being a free thinker, antagonized the establishment of his day. He was beheaded under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb in front of the Jamma Masjid in Old Delhi, where his tomb now stands. Legend tells that when he was beheaded, every drop of his blood called out "Ana al-Haq" (I am God!).
- Shakespeare, William** (1564–1616) An English dramatist, poet and actor, William Shakespeare was born and died in Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. He was educated at the local grammar school and in 1591 moved to London, where he became an actor, playwright and poet. He is credited with authoring several poems, including *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, 154 sonnets and a total of 37 stage plays. His body of works is considered the greatest in the history of English literature.
- Shams-i Tabriz** (c.1206–1247) Shaikh Shams al-Din Muhammad was a Persian mystic from Tabriz, in what is now Iran. Little is known about him, but he is commonly described as a wandering dervish and was said to be a disciple of Baba Kamaluddin Jundi. He is best known for his association with Jalaluddin Rumi, the great mystic poet of Persia. Rumi became intoxicated with love for him and they were inseparable. This led to the jealousy of Rumi's family and disciples, and when Shams disappeared one night, it was generally believed that he was murdered. Rumi's devotional poetry contained in the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz* was inspired by love for his Master.
- Soami Ji** (1818–1878) Seth Shiv Dayal Singh, known as Soami Ji Maharaj by his followers, was associated with Tulsi Sahib of Hathras

from his birth, as his parents were disciples of Tulsi Sahib. He began meditating at an early age and spent seventeen years in deep meditation before he started teaching in 1861. Soami Ji gave the universal teachings of the saints in unveiled, simple language that even the common person could easily understand. His teachings are set forth in *Sar Bachan Poetry* and *Sar Bachan Prose*.

Socrates (c.469–399 BCE) A great mystic philosopher of ancient Athens, Greece, Socrates' personality and doctrines are immortalized in the writings of his disciple Plato. Socrates pursued the message that real knowledge is the knowledge of one's own true self, mystic knowledge of the soul. He devoted his last thirty years to convincing Athenians that their opinions about moral matters could not bear the weight of critical scrutiny. Charged with introducing strange gods and corrupting the citizens of Athens, Socrates was sentenced to death and died by drinking hemlock.

Sundardas (1596–1689) Born in Jaipur, Sundardas became a disciple of Dadu Dayal at a young age. He went on to establish his spiritual headquarters at Fatehpur in Rajasthan and to give initiation in Rajasthan and the Punjab. He wrote more than thirty-five books, out of which *Gyan Samudra Sarvang Yog*, *Panchendriya Charit*, *Sukh Samadhi* and *Sundar Bilas* are the best known.

Surdas Surdas Ji was an Indian saint who lived at the time of Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century. He was appointed Governor of Sandila in Avadh (Oudh), but was so charitable that he gave away all the money in the state treasury. He then fled, leaving one of his poems in the treasure chest, and took to the company of sadhus, dedicating himself solely to the Lord. He was arrested and imprisoned, but was freed as the result of a poem he addressed to Akbar. The remainder of his life was spent at Varanasi (Benares). A line from one of his hymns is included in the Adi Granth. He should not be confused with the blind Hindi poet also called Surdas, author of *Sur Sagar*.

Tegh Bahadur, Guru (1621–1675) The son of Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur became the ninth guru in the line of Guru Nanak. In 1675 he was beheaded at Chandni Chowk, Delhi by order of

Emperor Aurangzeb for refusing to embrace Islam. Fifty-nine of his shabds and fifty-seven of his shlokas were included by Guru Gobind Singh in the *Adi Granth*.

Tulsi Sahib (1763–1843) The great poet-saint of Hathras and author of the *Ghat Ramayana*, Tulsi Sahib was born in the princely family of the Peshwas. He began to show signs of a devotional trend of mind at an early age and had no desire for worldly pleasures and pursuits. When he was appointed as the royal successor, he fled from the court and settled in Hathras near Agra, where he was known as Dakkhini Baba. Soami Ji's mother was a disciple of Tulsi Sahib long before Soami Ji was born, and Soami Ji had contact with him from childhood.

Tulsidas (1532–1623) The mystic-poet Goswami Tulsidas was born into a very poor family and lived and died in Varanasi (Benares), Uttar Pradesh. He was a disciple of Baba Narhari Das and is considered one of the greatest devotional poets of medieval India. His epic poem *Ramcharitmanas*, which describes the path to Ram, the one Lord, and is based on the ancient story of the Ramayana, is still a popular Hindi classic.

Vivekananda (1863–1902) Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta and was a graduate of the Christian Mission College. Originally named Narendranath, he was an ardent seeker and ultimately became a disciple of Ramakrishna. In 1893 he addressed the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago on the philosophical aspects of Hinduism and made a deep impression on those present, creating considerable interest in Indian philosophy. He wrote a number of books on the yogic path, including *Jnana Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*.

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